Informational Mass Communication

A Collection of Essays

Edited by Kaarle Nordenstreng

In the late 1960s some universally recognized tendencies and controversies became very clear in Finnish broadcasting. New people with new ideas brought the Finnish Broadcasting Company to the focus of attention of the Finnish people — and of all the political groups. The new ideas met with a hardening opposition from conservative interests.

The new philosophy was called **informational programme policy.** It was created in close co-operation between media practitioners and academic communication researchers. The point was to maximize the flow of true, new and important information, not to maximize the number of viewers, nor of believers.

The authors of this book, all of them more or less centrally involved in developing and executing the new policy, did not at that time fully see the potential threat felt by holders of power when faced with comprehensive information about society. Now, they see that the access to knowledge and information is one of the most important reasons why the ruling class has a monopoly of power and why the underprivileged lack power. Consequently, an attempt at maximal true information cannot be socially neutral but necessarily becomes 'partial'.

The 'Finnish approach' has awakened the interest of many broadcasters, communication researchers and students of journalism from various countries. The purpose of this book is to meet that interest and present the theoretical orientations and policy innovations in Finnish broadcasting to a wider public.

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Democracy cannot function under conditions where independent critical thinking does not prevail among the citizens of a nation, when accepted customs and conformist pressure of public opinion form the content of people's view of the world. Under such conditions we cannot speak of the will of the people; this is merely a reflection, an echo of the message originated by a small group of privileged individuals who exercise control over the channels of power, influence and communication. When this is the case, the so-called free market economy, which calls itself the society of free choice, is not entitled to look down on so-called totalitarian societies.

Urho Kekkonen,
President of the Republic of Finland
(Statement on the Day of Independence,
December 6, 1971)

Foreword

This book has been inspired by two motives, one general and one specific. The general source of inspiration is a global recognition of the importance of mass communications in the present-day world — both developed and developing nations. The ever-growing potential which the mass media possess for almost any kind of social and political purpose has recently attracted attention: not only to the great impact and influence of mass communications in society but also to the goals, principles, and policies determining the operation of the media. Recent activity of UNESCO in this field[1] is both an indication of, and further encouragement towards, an international orientation stressing the critical role of mass communications in society and the need to discover and determine communication policies.

The particular motive behind this book is a desire to meet the interest which many colleagues — broadcasters, communication researchers, students of journalism, politicians, cultural critics — from various countries have shown in policy innovations and theoretical orientations in Finnish broadcasting. Our 'Finnish

1 See the following publications by UNESCO:

— Mass Media in Society — the Need of Research (Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, N:o 59, 1970)
— Proposals for an International Programme of Communication Research (COM/MD/20, 1971)
— Report on Meeting of Experts on Communication Policies and Planning (COM/MD/24, 1972)
— Report on Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Europe (1972)

approach' is not entirely unique; some universally recognised tendencies and controversies have just become exceptionally clear in the contemporary history of mass media operation in Finland, and especially in Finnish broadcasting. Furthermore, our relatively small community of people professionally concerned with mass communications has benefitted from the somewhat unusual cooperation between media practitioners and academic communication researchers. Consequently, there has been fertile ground for exercises in communication philosophy which may not have captured so much attention in other countries.

However, as we live in a capitalist society, our philosophy is obviously not universal. It cannot directly be applied to socialist countries or the Third World; it is limited to the advanced industrial West. The universal perspectives of informational mass communication deserve a completely different treatment.

The following texts have not been designed to form a systematic and stylistically unified presentation. Yet they all present a common basic philosophy: the policy of informational mass communication. This approach has gradually been introduced in practice and analysed in theory over the past 6—7 years. The essays in this book have been written during those years mainly for a domestic audience (in Finnish), and accordingly, they present a sample of deliberations at a time of intensive reorientation and innovation. This time, however, has marked just one stage in a historical development, and therefore we do not want to export this anthology as a definite 'Finnish approach'. In fact, most of the authors now have reservations on what they wrote just a few years ago; some of these nuances have been incorporated in the Epilogue which provides a more current view of the subject.

The texts have been slightly modified for this English edition. Nevertheless, a certain amount of redundancy is unavoidable since they were written as variations on a common theme. The original sources of publication are to be found in the editorial comments preceding each of the four main sections of the book. Besides, the last pages list other publications which contain more material in English for the interested reader.

Acknowledgements are due to the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO which has provided the financial means for translating about half the texts; the rest are adaptations of earlier translations made for YLE.[2] Translations have been made by Mrs. Ellen Valle and advice given by Mr. Donald Fields who both deserve compliments for their devotion to the international advancement of the ideas of informational mass communication.

Tampere, January 1973

Kaarle Nordenstreng

2 YLE are the identifying letters of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (in Finnish 'Yleisradio') used in international broadcasting, e.g. Eurovision. This abbreviation will be used throughout this book to denote the Finnish Broadcasting Company.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

The first introductory chapter provides a five-year history of Finnish broadcasting, based on some background information on Finnish society and its mass communication in general; on a description of the intentions and operations of broadcasters; as well as on information gathered by systematic research about how society reacted to changes in policy. The reason for setting the particular happenings in Finnish broadcasting as the frame of reference for the whole book is the historical fact that all of the authors and their ideas were more or less centrally involved in carrying out the reorientation in broadcasting aiming at what is called *informational programme policy*. Accordingly, the reader is first offered an overall social and human background for the substantial contributions which follow.

The introductory chapter by Littunen and Nordenstreng was first written as a paper for an international symposium 'New Frontiers of Television', held in Bled, Yugoslavia, in June 1971; the original also contained concluding sections which in this book have been incorporated in the Epilogue. The original paper has been published in English in the Proceedings of the Symposium and in an abbreviated form in *The Democratic Journalist;* a French version has been published in *Études* (see References).

1. Informational broadcasting policy: the Finnish experiment

by Yrjö Littunen and Kaarle Nordenstreng

The scene: political and cultural situation in Finnish society in the 1960's

Finland is a fairly typical industrialized nation with a capitalist economy and a so-called western cultural climate. This means that the country's gross national product ($ 2000 per capita) is among the top twenty in the world, that private capital controls over 80 % of total production, and that industry, commerce, and other service branches dominate the economic structure, with only some 20 % of the 4.5 million people earning their living from agriculture. This means that political and cultural conditions in the country are designated 'pluralistic' in official domestic policy-making as well as in cross-national comparative studies: there is a multi-party system with the socialist[1] and non-socialist wing in the parliament of roughly equal size, there is a mixed western cultural tradition in all layers of culture and education, and there is a mass media system with a large number of 'independent voices' (there are more than 50 dailies alone) fitting in the western philosophy of freedom of speech.

Behind the facade of a welfare state there are, of course, many trends which reveal severe social and political problems. Unemployment is a chronic disease, reflecting the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy, which has created the problems of underdeveloped areas with their unskilled small peasants, the 'rural proletariat'. By and large income differences in Finland are among the largest in Western Europe (after Spain, Portugal, and Italy). Political stability is delicately dependent on the relations between the two major parties of the left, on the one hand, and on the national foreign policy in relation to the Soviet Union, on the other. Until 1966 the Social Democrats were more willing to cooperate with the non-socialist parties (Agrarian, Liberal, Conservative, Swedish People's) than with the Communists, who were to a large extent eliminated from the political scene in spite of their considerable share of seats in parliament.

After the 1966 general election, however, the socialist parties took a step towards each other and sealed their parliamentary majority with a government coalition in cooperation with the non-socialist center (the 'popular front' ideology). The same basis for a government coalition was maintained after the 1970 general election, even though the outcome of the election was a landslide to the right.[2] However, in the spring of 1971 the Com-

1 'Socialist' here refers to Social Democrats and Communists who have, respectively, occupied the following percentage of seats in parliament during the past ten years:
1958—62 25.5 % and 25 %, 1962—66 20 % and 23.5 %
1966—70 30.5 % and 21 %, 1970—72 26 % and 18 % 1972—28 % and 18,5 %

2 In connection with this radical change in party support the old principle of party loyalty among the Finnish electorate has been re-evaluated. Studies by Pertti Suhonen at the University of Tampere show that as many as 30 % of the voters changed their party allegiance before 1970, and furthermore, that most of these shifts took place fairly early (1967—68) in connection with a difficult recession and unemployment. Accordingly, the party change behaviour can be explained to a large extent by materialistic conditions, but there is also evidence that there have been non-materialistic psychological motives for changing parties, e.g. anger and anxiety among many farmers and Social Democrats as a result of the government coalition with the Communists.

munists walked out of the government in protest against a price increase programme (partly also as a consequence of their internal ideological debate), although this did not destroy cooperation between the socialist parties outside the government. Generally speaking, after a five-year period of moderate leftism, the political and cultural atmosphere of the country has recently been turning increasingly towards the right.

It should be noted that the policy of the 1966—71 cabinets, largely controlled by the socialists, can hardly be characterized as a socialist one; rather it was concerned with conventional reform and a technocratic policy which now proves to have served the interests of capital even more than those of labour. Accordingly, not even the presence of Communists (not to speak of Social Democrats) prevented the government from pursuing a bourgeois policy in a capitalist economy which in all circumstances managed to determine the basic rules of the game.

This paper is an account of the changes taking place in Finnish broadcasting during the past few years within the general political framework described above. In fact, radio and television are essential elements in that framework; no doubt there will be a lengthy chapter on them in the political and cultural history of the late 20th century in Finland, when it is eventually written. The focus of interest lies in the period beginning about 1965 and ending in the early seventies.

Technically and organizationally radio and also television were fairly far advanced in Finland by the mid-sixties.[3] As to programme policy and operational goal

3 YLE operates two countrywide sound radio networks and a third regionally limited radio network for Swedish-speaking coastal areas of the country. Each of these radio networks is on the air for 18 hours a day, and in the daytime they partly

setting, however, the state of affairs was quite conventional. Before 1965, radio and television were perceived in Finland as entertainment media on the one hand, and media of such information as was in harmony with the way of thinking of the existing institutions in society, on the other. The general approach is typically indicated by the key phrases in YLE's charter from the State: 'suitable entertainment' and 'useful information'. In practice, the programmes consisted either of light shows and soap operas (mostly American) or of an élitist high-brow culture incomprehensible to the ordinary man.

The most significant characteristic of the programmes was their *passive relation to society:* broadcasting reflected the existing institutions, and furthermore, made public only those facts and opinions which fitted in with the frame of reference of the dominant interest

transmit the same programme. About 50 % of all programmes consists of music.

Television was started in Finland in the late fifties. Television coverage by 1968 extended over the whole country, and in addition to one national network there is a second channel which reaches about half the population and is scheduled to cover the whole country in the mid-seventies. The combined programme time for the two television channels exceeds 70 hours a week. About 60 % of all programmes are of Finnish origin, of these some 10 % in Swedish (the Swedish programmes are transmitted mainly on the second channel). Roughly half of the programmes are entertainment, about 20 % of screening time is composed of news and current affairs programmes, and nearly 20 % of documentary programmes. School TV broadcasts for 5 hours a week. About 25 % of total programming time is operated by a private commercial company, Mainos-TV-Reklam, which rents YLE's studios and channels and uses them for commercial television broadcasting (in addition to advertising, mainly entertainment programmes and no news).

groups (the power élite). Accordingly, the tone of broadcasting matched the view of the world covered by the right-wing and the so-called independent press, whereas the socialist press with its minority circulation (about 10 % of total press circulation) was in clear contrast to the tone of broadcasting.

Spokesmen for the established institutions had access to the programmes, from bishops of the State Church to university professors and captains of industry. The point of view of the non-christian or the atheist was hardly ever covered, nor were ordinary citizens given a possibility to put their point of view in a serious context, and in connection with a strike it was absolutely impossible for the workers to get themselves heard. Consequently, radio and TV did not give a truthful picture of the world; they put a bias on social reality.

In short, broadcasting not only worked in favour of the status quo, but it reflected only one interpretation of that status quo. It strengthened those institutions which already had achieved a legitimized status; it served the narrowest core of the establishment. In other words, broadcasting supported and enforced only a single prevailing 'bourgeois hegemony', to use the term of Antonio Gramsci.

Certainly, this kind of programme policy existed within the expressed principles of political impartiality, fair journalism and freedom of speech. This paradoxical situation is explained by the theory of hegemony: as one form of consciousness achieves the position of hegemony in society, it becomes 'normal', 'apolitical', 'colourless', etc.

By and large, this kind of broadcasting policy is a reality in most of the world, including those western countries which so often boast of pluralism and freedom of speech. To quote Eino S. Repo, Director of Radio

in YLE and former President of the OIRT:

> From a global point of view it looks at present as though broadcasting in most parts of the world is experienced as media of direction and not as communication media; in other words not as media serving the public and its needs but directing the public.[4]

Whereas the Finnish model of broadcasting before 1965 is evidently a very typical one, the period which followed may be more unique.

The theory: principles of informational programme policy

The starting point for the new broadcasting era was explicit denial of the passive establishment-oriented programme policy and an adoption of an *active role* as a participant in the political and cultural life of the society. The conservative and entertainment approach was replaced by a philosophy which stressed the importance of conveying socially relevant information, not only from the point of view of the prevalent hegemony but especially from the point of view of those interest groups which were left outside the official channels of information and influence. Accordingly, the new objective was to *cover the social reality in all of its aspects, each under equal conditions, regardless of the priorities set up by the traditional hegemony*. The underlying idea was to contribute to a better realization of the original principle of democracy which, to work properly, vitally needs a well-informed public.

How did it happen that such a radical reorientation of the role of broadcasting took place after 1965? In

4 Report on a Round Table 'Communication 1980' on Mass Communication Research and Policy, Hanko, Finland, April 1970. (See References)

the given politico-cultural situation, the actual start was largely due to a single move made by the highest decision-making organ in Finnish broadcasting, the Administrative Council nominated by parliament. This council appointed a new Director General, Mr. Eino S. Repo, writer and cultural critic in the liberal tradition, and thus in sharp contrast to the old leaders of the company who were above all technically oriented administrators with a minimum of social concern. The guidelines of the reform advocated by Mr. Repo were known to the decision-makers, who unanimously approved his ideas as to the new role of broadcasting.

In practice, the reform after Mr. Repo's appointment was closely connected with long-range planning introduced by him for the first time into YLE. In spring 1966 a team was formed to establish a permanent planning organization and work out the goals and operational principles of YLE in the form of a comprehensive long-range planning report. The team engaged in this basic survey consisted of half a dozen members representing various branches of expertise in the company (programmes, technology, economics), with Mr. Repo as chairman. Also involved in this team were the two social scientists hired by the company; they started research on the programmes and the public.[5] The team used several outside consultants, e.g. social scientists from the committee for mass communication research formed by Mr. Repo to stimulate sociological, psychological and pedagogical studies of radio and television.[6]

5 These research experts in the long-range planning group were Dr. Yrjö Ahmavaara, Professor of Mathematics and Methodology of Social Science, and Dr. Kaarle Nordenstreng, head of YLE research from 1967 to 1971.

6 A pioneer of academic participation in this committee was Professor Yrjö Littunen.

The first task of the long-range planning team was to analyze the goals and tasks of Finnish broadcasting. In all the forty years the company had existed no one had ever tried to work out any coherent, or even moderately thorough, programme policy objective, at least not on paper. This may seem strange, but in fact it is quite usual. Most of the world's public broadcasting companies have until recently lacked a systematic or even relatively detailed general policy, and many still do.

In spring 1967 the first part of the 'Finnish Broadcasting Company Orientation' report was published. This aimed at defining the goals and tasks of broadcasting in Finland. The second part was published in book form in 1968. This concentrated on outlining the practical programme machinery that the team believed would best implement the programme policy principles set out in the first part, up to about 1980. The third part of the report, published in 1969, deals with the auxiliary functions essential to broadcasting, i.e. the technical operations, finances, staff policy, research, foreign service, development of the organization, archives, etc.

As early as 1967, the Administrative Council formally approved the central ideas of orientation when it unanimously carried the regulations for practical programme work, the Broadcasting Regulations. This decision was significant on two grounds. First of all, for the first time in its history YLE had a systematic and comprehensive programme policy covenant. Secondly, the substance of the new policy was exceptionally progressive; one might even call it radical because it deliberately advocated maximally pluralistic and informative programmes.

The goal of the new programme policy was the *intellectual activation of the audience, the broadening of the people's world view (Weltanschauung)*. According to

the new programme policy, as stated in the introductory paragraph of the Broadcasting Regulations, *a principal aim of broadcasting ought to be to offer the public a view which changes as the world changes and as our knowledge of it increases, changes or becomes more perfect.* This does not mean that radio and TV should be content only to reflect, in a passive way, social life and conditions. On the contrary, broadcasting ought to be a living and active factor in the society to which it belongs, consciously inspiring discussion.

However, the same policy statement notes that radio and TV should not try to implant any particular theory of life in the mind of their audience, but rather should aim at *making available the blocks necessary in building a personal world view. Different, even opposed views of life and the world can and should be presented in the programmes, but the evaluation of these views is an individual affair which does not belong to broadcasting but to each member of society.*

The principle of an informational programme policy — or of an informational press theory in general — can also be expressed as in the third part of the Long-Range Planning Report for YLE:

> The deliberate aim of informational broadcasting is to avoid the censorship which may follow as a consequence of the inclusion of ideological truths in programmes. This does not mean that informational programme activity should not include such ideological truths, but only that the *censorship* connected with them should be avoided. This can be achieved by allowing various ideological viewpoints to be brought forth within the framework of programmes as a whole, thus cancelling out the information barriers set by each of them. The principles of informational broadcasting are derived from the general concept of information, according to which various world views are seen as alternative hypotheses rather than as ideological truths. Only by following this principle can broadcasting offer the public the greatest possible amount of the most accurate possible information about the world around it. Informational broadcasting rests on the assumption of the greatest possible independence of all pressure and interest groups, including the state.

Thus the aim is to mobilize the individual's thinking, so that he is able to construct his world view on the basis of the factual information supplied to him every day; to prevent him from becoming ossified and rigid while the world around him is changing and our knowledge of it increasing. If the individual receives information about a fact which does not fit in with his stereotyped, preconceived ideas, intellectual activation is possible and the result will probably be a more realistic stereotype.

By way of comparison, *commercial* mass communication is based on the sale of messages. It follows that the content of commercial mass communication is determined by the things which the public already knows how to want (and is often manipulated to want). For this reason commercial mass communication tends to minimize the information content of its messages: it tends to tell its public what the latter already more or less knows. Accordingly, commercial mass communication is the logical opposite of informational mass communication. To be precise, commercial mass communication is just an example of a more general approach which may be called *confessional* mass communication in which only messages which are consistent with a particular political or religious ideology are allowed.

The adoption of this informational broadcasting policy also had a significant effect on the kind of communication research carried out in Finland. *Along with the reorientation of the programme maker from a passive and irrationally oriented approach to an active and analytical one, a corresponding reorientation took place among the researchers:* they turned from the purely

empiricist and positivistic tradition of the social sciences — often called by practitioners 'premature academic theorizing' — to normative considerations and the problems of goal definition.[7] The researchers not only gathered and interpreted data but were also involved in evaluating the meaning and consequences of the phenomena they were studying. In fact, the most important branch of research was considered to be a 'radio and TV philosophy' and a conceptual-analytical pondering of goals. It was strongly felt that empirical behavioural research alone was able to serve the development of broadcasting only on a limited scale, and that placing one's confidence solely in traditional sociological and psychological research in many respects meant bypassing real problems. An organizational manifestation of this new research approach was the combination of longrange planning and research into a single unit.[8]

Consequently, the focus of research was deflected from rating and appreciation studies to analyses of programme contents and perceived comprehension of programmes among the general public:

> For instance, in Finland we have set the aims of broadcasting in a way which places the goal of satisfaction in a peripheral position and the goals of information and comprehension in a central position: the ultimate objective of programmes is to widen the cognitive frame of reference or world view of the audience. According to these kinds of criteria the 'utility' of a programme which presents the potential dangers of, say, a nuclear war or population growth is very high, whereas according to need gratification criteria such a programme would evidently be useful only to some masochists. In fact, there is an essential contradiction between the goals of information and satisfaction — not only as is predicted in the theory of cognitive dissonance, but also in a more fundamental way: How can an individual be gratified or dissatisfied with something of which he has no previous knowledge.[9]

7 This meant a purposive deviation from the American tradition of mass communication research; cf. Kaarle Nordenstreng, Communication Research in the United States: A Critical Perspective, *Gazette*, 1968, pp. 207—216.

8 A detailed description of the research policy and organization will be found in an article by Kaarle Nordenstreng in *International Studies of Broadcasting*, NHK, Tokyo, 1971.

It should be noted that even if the new informational approach led to a radical reorientation, it by no means represented a revolutionary philosophy with regard to the social and political system. In fact, it hardly goes beyond the traditional liberalistic ideology derived from John Stuart Mill and his concept of a 'free market place of ideas'. At the level of principles and objectives, it is difficult to term the informational broadcasting ideology 'leftist' or 'anti-societal'. Rather it fits well into the western journalistic tradition of the press as the watchdog of democracy, although the basic idea was reformulated in terms of the sociology of knowledge and the theory of semantic information.

In short, the informational concept of broadcasting means *guaranteed pluralism combined with a tendency towards objectivity in covering social reality*. An indication of the fact that the new approach, at the level of professed goals, did not imply any revolutionary or dogmatically partisan tendencies is the spontaneous sympathy with which producers and journalists working for radio and television responded to it, regardless of their political affiliation.

The informational programme policy has been described here as it was expressed in written documents and verbal statements. We now turn to the implementation of the new broadcasting policy in actual pro-

9 Kaarle Nordenstreng, Comments on 'Gratifications Research' in Broadcasting, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1970, p. 131.

gramme-making practice, and thereafter to the public reaction to it.

The making: characteristics of the Finnish broadcasting experiment 1965—70

The rise of the new broadcasting policy was generated by the emerging politico-cultural liberation of the late sixties, national and international. As these forces were truly pluralistic, with hardly any structured political or intellectual organization, the new policy also grew from separate elements rather than from a directed plan. In fact, changes in programme structure and editorial orientation at YLE began before the new programme policy statements were officially formulated. The official policy statement was published in 1967 in the new Broadcasting Regulations; but the first new societally oriented programmes in radio and television had been produced in 1965, and by 1966 the new line materialized in the first critical TV documentaries on basic problems in Finnish society.

When aiming at informational emphasis in radio and TV programmes, a critical approach becomes inevitable. The first signs of the new broadcasting policy in 1965 were on the side of 'pure' information, such as increasing the frequency of newscasts at the national as well as the provincial level, adding deeper background interpretations to news and commentaries, and searching for more societal news criteria. But news is not purely news, but often either good news or bad news. The producer began to dig deep into the functions and malfunctions of social institutions, report social problems and the processes which created the good or bad event. What the Finnish radio and TV audience got from the new programme policy was, first, more and more deeply

interpreted political, cultural and economic information on society and the world, and, secondly, more penetrating social criticism and analysis of institutional, national, or international malfunctions.

The new broadcasting policy of YLE was by no means unique in its practice of giving information and criticizing societal phenomena. What made the Finnish experiment unique was perhaps the theoretical approach and the intensity of the actual programme innovations, although actually the proportion of new-line critical documentaries was a neglible fraction of the total transmission time. Besides intensity in practice, important elements in mass communication ideology were introduced, more or less spontaneously in the beginning, then as established principles. These principles stem from the analysis of the news criteria.

The tradition of western journalism stresses the reader's *immediate interest* as the criterion for selecting what to report and what to omit. This is a commercial ideology transformed into an intellectual setting. In other words, supply and demand are the key concepts in deciding what news is fit to print. This was rejected in the new producer thinking. Although the producers themselves may not have indulged in conceptual analysis, it seems that what actually replaced the criterion of immediate interest was the *objective significance* of the event to the people and to the society. The significance of the news or other mass media content is thus determined by the extent to which the event reported indirectly or directly affects the course of life of the citizens, regardless of whether the public *a priori* perceives this effect or not.

The principle of objectivity in information would seem to solve many of the problems typical of television as a medium. By definition, television is picture-centered,

which according to many critics also drives TV journalism to action instead of thinking, to events rather than their causes, to people rather than issues. Objective information criteria would seem to counteract these tendencies, by activating the producers to find illustrations of things that are important, rather than making important those things that happen to lie closest to the cameraman.

The workability of this new approach was soon manifested in powerful documentaries in which the pictures were made to serve not only as information but also as criticism. In a documentary on power concentration in Finnish insurance, which had very hugh impact throughout the country, the young producer Reino Paasilinna mixed documentary interviews of small insurance policy holders with cabaret songs and flocks of sheep (in pictorial contrast with the interview explanations of the company presidents stating that policy holders exert full control of the 'mutual' insurance operations). This semi-documentary was immediately followed by a showdown between the insurance bosses, the producer, and a couple of critical commentators. The discussion, which was intended to balance the 'biassed' criticism of Paasilinna's programme, turned into exactly the opposite, as the insurance directors lost their tempers and were seen by many viewers to be unable to give acceptable answers to the questions raised in the programme. The next day the Finnish Prime Minister announced the government's intention to set up a committee to investigate the problem, but hectic debate over the control of big capital concentrations went on, leading to more extensive changes in the relations between political and economic power concentrations.

This programme appeared in December 1966. It was not the first critical TV programme, but with its immediately striking national impact in a way it signalled the beginning of the critical approach among Finnish TV producers. In subsequent years politico-cultural information and social criticism were extended to TV entertainment (the concept 'informational entertainment'), as well as the TV theatre (combinations of drama, cabaret and document).

An example of TV theatre productions with drama-cabaret-document elements was *Oma (Own)* which analyzed problems arising from conflicting goals of political democracy on one hand, and economic ownership and power on the other. Between presentation of facts (in a form of Brechtian-type dialogue) sarcastic cabaret-songs treated the same topics in a not-so-documentary manner. Although the facts presented were well documented, or documentable, and the tone even in the dramatic elements was cool, almost detached, the critical approach aroused very strong emotions in the conservative part of the audience. After public debate in the press, in parliament and at the top of the YLE hierarchy the very existence of the TV theatre was about to be terminated, but after protests from trade union groups and intellectual associations these plans were withdrawn. Similar conflicts have arisen subsequently.

Although there is good reason to speak of a young tradition in the societally critical, 'participating' programmes in documentaries as well as in drama and entertainment it should be remembered that both the absolute and relative amount of informational content was very small in the total stream of programme output. At its peak period in the spring of 1969 (including a TV week with the general theme of *Who has got power in Finland)* the percentage of TV programmes offering any form of societal information (not only criticism)

was not more than about 10 % of total transmission time. (It is true, however, that in some particular programme categories — especially documentaries and drama — the critically informational content grew larger than average.) Neither did the share of informational programmes on the radio exceed some 10—20 % of the total time of spoken programmes.

Accordingly, the implementation of the informational programme policy was by no means a comprehensive manoeuvre but was limited to a definite minority of the total programme output. For example, roughly half TV transmission time continued to consist of escapist entertainment (largely due to the programme profile of the Commercial TV Company, which occupies some 25 % of the total transmission time). Furthermore, not all informational programmes were especially 'hot' or took a clearly partisan approach against the prevailing hegemony. Neither can it be said that the informational programmes were typically leftist; in fact they often reflected more of the intellectual 'new left' approach than the true way of thinking of the working class people.

It remains an objective fact that, *seen against the grand total of programming, the informational programme policy was never more than a minority phenomenon.* It is important to bear this in mind when we turn to note the reaction aroused by broadcasting among decision makers in YLE and society in general.

The applause: audience reaction

As the preceding survey of the past five years indicates, the new programme policy, long-range planning and research all belong together and share a common motivation: activation of broadcasting. In the beginning,

the new line was welcomed by almost everybody. Plans for more versatile and effective programming were appreciated by the Administrative Council as well as the press, and planning and research activities were often referred to as indications of professional competence.

However, as soon as the new active line of broadcasting turned from verbal statements to actual behaviour — programmes with versatile contents, planning with concrete proposals and research with empirical results — the attitude towards broadcasting gradually began to change. The past two or three years have witnessed a drastic polarisation of opinions in Finland on broadcasting. It has clearly been a politically determined development, which has resulted in the present critical situation: the socialist parties are firmly defending the line started whereas the bourgeois parties are furiously attacking broadcasting and trying to 'normalize' what they claim is a left-wing monopoly.

The new broadcasting policy, begun in 1965, was not really designed to remain an experiment; the innovative changes were then understood as permanent. What gave it the character of an experiment was the fact that the 1965—68 innovations were partly abolished during 1969—71 by the alarmed conservatives who won in the 1970 elections. The politico-cultural analogy with the rise and fall of the Czechoslovak spring 1968 was so close that in the fall of 1969 the newly-appointed Director General in fact styled himself 'the Husàk of YLE.' By that time the personal exponent of the innovative period, Eino S. Repo, had been dismissed from his post as Director General.

The left-wing victory, particularly the landslide for the Social Democrats in the 1966 parliamentary elections, resulting also in a labour majority in the Administrative Council of YLE, had certainly helped pave the way for

the new broadcasting policy. Similarly, the 1970 parliamentary elections, yielding a right-wing victory, contributed to the 'normalization' process which aimed at taming the innovative period.

After the 1968 municipal elections as well as after the 1970 parliamentary elections, both of which resulted in losses to the parties that had supported the 1965 broadcasting policy changes, political leaders were quick to infer that the new broadcasting policy had actually been a central cause for the voters' protest. They protested by rejecting left and centre parties, which had been active or silent partners in the new 'indecent and unpatriotic' line on broadcasting policy. This explanation was equally welcome to winners and losers; the winning Conservatives asserted that election results showed how people reject 'leftism' and 'radicalism' in general, and the losing (farmer-supported) Centre Party leaders were relieved to have a scapegoat for their losses, as if the recent tax policy changes favoring big farm owners (a tiny minority of voters) had had nothing to do with the voting.

What was the actual public reaction to the new broadcasting policy? The research teams both at YLE and the University of Tampere have collected panel interviews which make it possible to compare media preferences as well as attitudes towards TV and radio programmes over the period 1965—70. Furthermore, national surveys were carried out to measure the perceived offensiveness of radio and TV programmes in different audience groups.[10]

In interviews both in 1965 and in 1970, a national

10 Most of these studies (published in Finnish) have been made by Veikko Pietilä, Pertti Suhonen and Tapio Varis at the Research Institute of the University of Tampere.

sample of the Finnish adult population was requested to evaluate which of the media — television, radio, newspapers, or magazines — reported news 'most reliably.' The focus of our interest here is particularly television, because the heaviest criticism against the new broadcasting policy was directed at television (particularly between 1968 and 1970 the conservative and, in part, the liberal press directed furious attacks against TV programmes, giving the impression that a wide credibility gap had developed between the broadcasters and the people, cf. below).

When comparing interview data collected in 1965 and 1970, the proportion which thought that television reported the news most reliably had changed from 41 % to 48 %. If anything, then, the credibility gap had diminished rather than widened. However, the proportion of those who indicated no opinion had declined from 18 % to 1 %. With the don't knows excluded, the proportion trusting TV most for news reporting was 51 % in 1965 and 49 % in 1970. Also the proportion disagreeing with the statement 'Radio and television often give unreliable information' was 67 % in 1965, but in spring 1970 only 51 %. But the proportion agreeing with this statement (strong and slight agreement combined), had remained the same over this period, 23 % and 24 %.

So the evidence concerning the alleged credibility gap in Finnish mass communications is not clearly affirmative. It seems that part of the audience has retained its trust in broadcasting, whereas some audience groups, earlier undecided or uninterested in credibility questions in broadcasting, have changed their disinterest into distrust. Accordingly, *the overall 'credibility index' has remained roughly the same over the five years; the structure of the support alone has undergone a change.*

A more detailed picture of the changes in public

opinion can be seen from panel comparisons among different political groupings. In 1965, when the non-socialist parties had a majority in parliament (and in the Administrative Council of YLE) Communist and Social Democrat voters among the TV audience gave considerably lower TV credibility ratings than in the spring of 1970, when the parliament (and YLE Council) had for three years been dominated by a socialist majority. This seems to indicate, as Pietilä concludes, that changes in the political power balance, bringing in changes in programme policy in an informational-critical direction, also brought increased confidence in the public broadcasting service among those who identified their interests with the emerging power set-up.

Accordingly, we should expect that the new broadcasting policy, while purporting to inform the least informed, to reveal the problems of the underprivileged, to criticize the unjust prosperity of the privileged, was also most approved by those socio-economic groups which benefitted most from societal information and critical treatment of social problems; that is, the underprivileged themselves. This interpretation can be empirically examined in a national survey where audience representatives were asked to recall whether they had seen or listened to programmes which in their opinion offended national values, religion, moral values and decency, or educational values.

Perceived offensiveness of TV programmes reveals marked differences among the occupational groups. Among workers, both skilled and unskilled, one-half had seen offending programmes, whereas among the white-collar occupations, professions included, the proportion was close to nine-tenths. Comparisons between groups at different educational levels indicated similar striking contrasts. Thus 33 % of respondents with a

primary school education, 26 % with a middle school education, but only 11 % of those with a higher formal education said that they had never seen offending television programmes. The cross-tabulation between perceived offence and party preference indicated similar directions, as 43 % of Communist voters, 48 % of Social Democrats, but only 17 % liberals and 15 % of conservatives said they had not seen offending television programmes.

The overall results seem to confirm the generalization that *informationally and socio-economically under privileged groups consider informational broadcasting policy supports their interests and needs, whereas the privileged groups think it conflicts with their interests.*

At this point we could return to the classic study by Douglas Waples (1942), which found that public library users could be directed to read books they were not really interested in, by simply putting interesting books on far-away shelves, and making less interesting books conspiciously available. Media can be a massage but not in the sense McLuhan understood. People are interested in both information and entertainment, and if they are not offered information, they are often happy with entertainment. Demand does not regulate supply: supply regulates demand.

Even supposing a two-way interaction between supply and demand, one mass medium alone cannot widen the supply. The other, more conservative media can control the bold innovator, and this is what happened in the Finnish experiment of 1965—1970.

The influence of other media on the climate of public opinion is documented in a detailed regional analysis by Pietilä and a YLE team report. During 1965—1970, in twenty leading daily newspapers a definite majority (57 %) of texts commenting on programme policy or

other YLE topics was negative towards the YLE line, while 24 % were neutral and 19 % positive. Most of the negative text volume was published by conservative party-affiliated papers. In *Uusi Suomi*, the official organ of the Conservative party, 96 % of all sample texts discussing programme policy aspects were negative during 1965—1970 (the rest was neutral). The liberal-independent papers commented on YLE programmes only a little more negatively than positively, but they put out more negative volume in 'neutral' quotations from negative text originally published elsewhere. The party-political polarization of the press on YLE issues was completed by the Communist and Social Democrat papers, which published definitely more positive than negative comments.

The political polarization of the press over the new broadcasting policy was not manifested in the discussion of basic principles such as the informational-critical approach in documentaries, improved information services particularly to groups of citizens without their own media hitherto, and the activated role of the media as an istitution in society. At first, even reactions to the actual implementation of these principles were largely positive; for example, the first critical documentary with a national impact by Paasilinna, in December 1966, was welcomed in the early edition next morning by the leading conservative daily, although the text was dropped from a later edition. Soon, however, the decisions were made and the line of each paper established. The YLE policy-supporting, labour-affiliated papers covered only 10 % of the total circulation of newspapers. The outcome was obvious.

The press reaction to this content analysis, when published as a research report, was furious. The team responsible for the data were called social 'scientists'

with quotation marks, and outraged accusations of falsified data were made in editorials. The sin of the research team was to conclude that the press had largerly *created* and not *reflected* the 'credibility gap' between the people and their broadcasting institution. Yet Pietilä's more extended study demonstrated later that an opinion of radio and TV programmes as 'too left-wing' varies with the regional strength of the non-socialist press; the weaker the left-wing press, the stronger the right-wing character of public opinion as reflected in attitudes toward YLE, and vice versa.

On the other hand, studies by Pietilä, Varis and others indicate that opinions about radio and TV programmes are to a large extent determined by the political preference of the individual and by the general 'opinion climate' of his social environment — rather than by his personal experiences of the programmes. Consequently, *there is empirical evidence proving the presence of a press influence on the formation of anti-broadcasting opinion among the non-socialist population.*

Accordingly, the press actively participated in determining the negative public reaction against the informational broadcasting policy; it functioned as a mirror of the community only in relation to a very small fraction of the public — the power élite and the most conservative subgroups — and for the most part it served as a mobilizer. But the majority press was not the only institution which actively worked against the new line in broadcasting; most of the established institutions in society (church, schools, army, commerce, industry, etc.) joined in the same campaign of denigrating YLE. Rational argumentation over the principles of informational programme policy was at a minimum as also was serious debate on the social issues covered by radio and TV; the energy was concentrated on placing YLE in a dubious light.

In short, *the reaction against the informational programme policy is a perfect example of the ways in which a power élite mobilises public opinion when needed in support of its own interests.* In this case it happened to be an especially easy job since general unrest over many economic and social problems provided the psychological preconditions for the introduction of a scapegoat.

Yet, in reviewing the Finnish experiment, it is unfair to state that the conservative reaction altogether abolished the informational policy from Finnish broadcasting. It is true that the creative time of innovation was paralysed and that gradual steps were even taken to eliminate manifestations of the informational policy from programme output. But the new policy orientation proved quite durable among the practitioners and it also won increasing support among left-wing and liberal people outside broadcasting itself.

And what is important, this popular support for the new line was not limited to the narrow score of intellectuals but extended to the grassroots of the general public; in fact, the organised working class in Finland has rapidly become conscious of the crucial role of mass media in their everyday political activity. Accordingly, the *reaction did not lead to a turning back of the clock but to the end of a progressive development accompanied by an increase in political pressures around broadcasting.*

PART TWO

PERSPECTIVES OF MASS COMMUNICATION IN SOCIETY

The following seven essays are overtly philosophical: they have been written not to achieve any practical solutions, but to help in defining and organising a broad conceptual framework on which operational practice and planning could be based. The outcome is far from solid theory; nor were these exercises designed as a systematic treatment. More of the latter type have been produced by Yrjö Ahmavaara whose theoretical influence is present in much of the substance which follows.[1]

Repo's chapter on the exercise of power is an adaptation of his essay published in *Parnasso*, a leading Finnish literary review, in 1969. Stormbom's essay on the consciousness industry was written in 1970 for the Hanko Round Table on communication research and policy; like Repo, Stormbom clearly reflects the concerns of a liberal communicator faced with increasing external constraints. Nordenstreng's first essay on freedom of speech was published in the cultural reviews *Suomalainen Suomi* (in Finnish) and *Nya Argus* (in Swedish) in 1969. His other two contributions are

1 Ahmavaara has published two recent books on related topics in Finnish: *Informaatio* (Information, a Study in the Logic of Communications, 1969) and *Yhteiskuntatieteen kyberneettinen metodologia* (The Cybernetic Methodology of the Social Sciences, 1970). Only parts of the former have been published in English so far (in the Hanko Round Table report of 1970), while an extended English version of the latter has been published by the title: *Cybernetics as a Method of Dialectical Materialism I—II*, Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi, Helsinki 1973.

composed of several writings produced in 1970. Chapter 5 is based on a speech delivered to the National Convention of Schoolteachers (published in *Opettajain Lehti*), and on an article about alienation in the YLE personnel magazine *Linkki*. Chapter 6, adapted from two articles on public opinion and polling, appeared in the daily *Helsingin Sanomat*.

Peltola's historical account of news journalism dates back to 1969, when a working group was formed in YLE to study and revise news policies. Peltola was secretary to this combined group of researchers and workers in news, and his essay is a slightly modified version of the introductory part of a final report on news policy, published for internal discussion in YLE in 1970 (an English summary was also prepared and later published in the *Educational Broadcasting Review* and in *Sociology of Mass Communication*, a reader.)

Ahmavaara's essay in this collection is a theoretical comment on the ideas behind informational mass communication and the possibility to realise them, given from the Marxist point of view. The essay has been written exclusive for this book.

2. Mass communication and the exercise of power

by Eino S. Repo

The use of power in human society probably began with the club. Power was linked to physical strength, as it still is today for example in baboon communities, in the world of young schoolboys, in various gangs and other similar groups at a corresponding mental level. At a very early stage of human history, however, knowledge and power became associated; the individual with knowledge also came to possess power. The relationship worked the other way as well; power brought knowledge. This was the case for example in the theocratic states of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China, in the nomadic culture described in the Old Testament and in the history of the papacy, and it is still the case in societies ruled by an absolute monarch or run by a single party.

There have also existed numerous societies in which real power was possessed not by the chief of the community but by those in control of knowledge: sorcerers, prophets or whatever name they were called by in a particular culture. Such cultures have existed on all continents, and have perhaps given rise to the persistent myth of the divine origin of knowledge. This myth was not by any means unique to the ancient Greek culture; it was strong in the religions based on the Old and New Testaments, and in the various sects of Islam, and the Buddhist concept of 'enlightenment' is naturally of the same origin.

What is described above is naturally not real knowledge, but articles of faith of various types and levels.

Real knowledge comes into conflict with the beliefs created by power or with the power which is based on faith; a well-known case from the beginning of modern times is that of Galilei, and a couple of centuries later we might mention Darwin. There are innumerable examples, not least from our own day and age. The usual consequence of such a conflict is that those in power try to prevent the publication of information which differs from their way of thinking or which is unpleasant to them. Such knowledge might undermine their power. The exercise of power, as we know, is usually based on the concealment of knowledge from all except the power holders, and only such information is transmitted which is positive or useful from their point of view. The concealment of knowledge has always been an essential part of the basic strategy of power.

This was also easy in practice, since communication in ancient times was awkward and difficult even after the invention of the printing press. At that point, however, it was no longer so difficult that others besides those in power would not have been able to diffuse another kind of information possibly opposed to the wielders of power. A familiar example in the West is that of bulls against the sale of indulgences, published by the monk Luther. They spread in the form of broadsheets in large numbers throughout the German princedoms; this event can probably be considered as marking the beginning of the breakdown of the power of the Pope and the Catholic Church in a large part of Northern Europe.

It was natural for the printing press to develop a system of censorship. This institution actually came into being simultaneously with the invention of the art of printing, and as we well know is still in existence. Its main purpose is to prevent the diffusion of knowledge harmful to those in power and to prevent disturbance to their feelings or their peace of mind. The institution of censorship functions in society as a conserver of the existing power relations and cultural patterns.

During the first two centuries of the press, the concealment of information became more and more difficult and complicated, particularly in those countries where the social system was developing towards parliamentary democracy. When it took on the task of controlling the use of power in society, the press became the 'fourth estate'. During the most recent phases, the press has developed more and more into a tool of the wielders of power, a device either of the state or of some power greater than the state. In the course of its development into a giant business enterprise, the press has also begun itself to exercise power in society; the case of the Springer concern in West Germany is not an isolated instance.

During this most recent phase, another source of influence, in many ways even more powerful, has arisen alongside the press, and this is broadcasting — radio and television.

Understandable enough, the holders of power soon began to feel an interest in this new field of communication which promised such useful opportunities for exercising power. The significance and value of radio as a tool of power was probably first realized and adopted in practice by the totalitarian states, or at least those in which the technical conditions for this existed: the post-revolutionary Russia, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Franco Spain, Imperial Japan, etc. In some countries, the possibility of listening to other stations than those of one's own country was excluded: in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, for example, this was forbidden

on pain of severe sanctions. The radio then became a tool of propaganda and agitation, rather than of communication.

In certain parliamentary democracies, too, the government immediately attempted to obtain control of radio and subsequently of television broadcasting, and in fact succeeded in this endeavour. In practice this usually has meant the exclusion of information unfavourable to the government; as recent examples we may mention the France of de Gaulle and, to a slightly lesser extent, that of Pompidou. The best example of a case in which this attempt on the part of the government to seize control of the media did not succeed is that of England in the late 1920's, when Winston Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, tried to bring the BBC under government authority, so that it would not be able to bring up matters unfavourable to the policies of the government. In a similar situation some four decades later, Prime Minister Wilson declared a byocott on the BBC, i.e. he refused to give either interviews or statements to the broadcasting corporation, although he continued to allow these to commercial television.

The first step of the *coup d'ètat* specialists in Latin America, and in general of insurrectionists everywhere, is to seize the radio stations. The structure of the African single-party systems automatically includes control of broadcasting by the government or by those in power at any given moment. In certain countries, such as Thailand, the army has surveillance over broadcasting; the king also has his own station, as do the Americans. In most Asian countries, broadcasting is a tool of the government or the party, as in Mao's China or in North Korea. New Zealand has as separate ministry for broadcasting, and broadcasting activity is naturally closely connected with government. In the Arab countries, broadcasting is dependent on the government, and functions as a tool of government power. The same is naturally true in present-day Greece; in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe as in Cuba, broadcasting is controlled by the party.

In countries where broadcasting is not totally or directly linked to political power, the considerable amounts of capital investment it requires usually tie it to economic power. This is the case, for example, in the commercial broadcasting of the United States, which usually demonstrates considerable solidarity with government policies as long as these are felt to be useful to the needs of capital itself. Broadcasting is perhaps least tied to political power in Japan (where, however, there are dozens of local commercial broadcasting enterprises), in Canada and in certain west and north European countries, but political pressure on broadcasting and attempts at seizure have increased, particularly during recent years, in these as well.

On the basis of this survey, we can conclude that broadcasting is regularly subordinated to the holders of power, and that it serves their needs as a tool for guiding and leading the people. Such broadcasting enterprises usually function as conservers of the existing social structure and its cultural patterns. This is also true in those cases there broadcasting activity is seized in a power turnover in which only the wielders of power are changed, while the basic structure of society remains the same.

There are relatively few broadcasting enterprises which form exceptions to this rule, and it would seem that political power in particular is more and more vigorously seeking to gain control of broadcasting. This is the case in all of the Scandinavian countries, and Finland is no exception.

Since the mid-sixties in Finland, the view has been fairly thoroughly adopted that broadcasting should be an institution which serves the audience with information. This would exclude the possibility of it serving some other institution, or more precisely, falling under the control of some other institution in society. Our broadcasting legislation, however, is both out-of-date and unclear, and this places considerable obstacles in the path of practical measures, particularly since the legislation in question was designed for quite different conditions than those of the present age of radio and television. They are nevertheless in force, and to bring them up to date would be an extremely difficult task politically. The overall situation of broadcasting is thus, to say least, in doubt.

In Finland, broadcasting activity is carried on by YLE, of which over 90 % is publicly owned. In practice this authority is exercised in the meetings of the company by the Ministry of Communications and Public Works, through its representative. The ministry, however, does not interfere in the functioning of YLE in any other way, although theoretically its duties include the general surveillance of broadcasting; it is supposed to ensure that YLE adheres to the broadcasting legislation. The highest authority in YLE is wielded by the Administrative Council (a Board of Governers), elected by parliament. The Council is supposed to represent the power relations in parliament at the time. The term of office of the 21-member council is four years; if power relations in parliament alter during this interval, this does not affect the composition of the council.

In former years, membership of the Administrative Council was a fairly formal affair and not sought after to any great extent. During the past decade, however, a change has taken place. With the coming of television,

the increasing significance of broadcasting began to be understood in Finland, and increased interest was felt in political circles in broadcasting. Although the objectives of broadcasting policy of the various parties had not been explicitly formulated — this has taken place only during the past few years — certain interests could nevertheless be clearly perceived: each party desired to benefit from broadcasting, at the same time preventing any other party or ideology from benefitting more. Since the late sixties, the relations between broadcasting and political power has been the subject of more or less close, but nevertheless constant public attention and debate. Although this debate cannot be considered particularly fruitful in its results, it has nevertheless served the useful purpose of keeping the entire complex of problems in the foreground and thus justifying hopes for some improvement.

Developments in Finland have so far brought us to the point where YLE is generally considered to be under the authority of parliament, since it is parliament which elects its highest decision-making organ, the Administrative Council. Experience so far has shown that the individuals elected to this position are either professional politicians (usually members of parliament), party officials or persons in some other way closely involved in party activity. If a member of the Administrative Council gains a seat in the government, he almost always continues to occupy his seat on the YLE Administrative Council. It has happened, for example, that the Prime Minister and chairman of the YLE Administrative Council have been one and the same man, or that the Minister of Communications has continuted to function as a member of the Council.

It is thus more less natural that the twists and turns of political life are reflected in the activity of the Council.

One danger which has not been avoided is that decisions made by the YLE Administrative Council will be viewed as part of the political decision-making process, as the exercise of political power.

The internal political situation in Finland has long been anything but clear; most of our parties are in a state of internal flux and incapable of developing their views in a world of accelerating change and development. It is quite natural that the instability of political life is reflected in the YLE Administrative Council and the decisions of its members. In actual fact, we have come to the point where the members of the board have become more and more dependent on their political background and above all on their own parliamentary group; principles of profit and loss have been supplanted by political expediency. Thus important real decisions are made not within YLE, but outside it, in parliamentary groups and other decisions-making party organs. In most cases, they rest not on the factual material collected by the broadcasting company, but on political values and questions of expediency.

The members of the Administrative Council seem to feel their responsibility not so much to the listeners and viewers, i.e. to the audience which the institution they direct is supposed to serve, as to their political affiliation and their electorate. The political arguments of the day seem to be gaining more and more prominence as factors, and sometimes decisive factors, in the decisions of the Administrative Council. On the other hand, decisions are often delayed, particularly in bigger questions, since an essential part of the decision-making process takes place outside YLE, in the political field, in which this process is slow and difficult, and before elections at least, unpredictable.

Thus broadcasting in Finland has developed into one

component of the political field, and all signs seem to indicate that it will be even more closely involved in politics in the future. A system whose original purpose was to guarantee parliamentary control of broadcasting has gradually developed into a system of political control. It is sometimes adduced, as justification of this state of affairs, that this means realisation of democratic principles, and adherence to the democratic rules of the game. The democracy involved, here, however, is not real, since the majority is enabled to use its vote to affect broadcasting policy and to reduce the media's freedom of movement in the informational field.

A real adherence to the democratic rules of the game would involve a weighing of factual material from the point of view of audience benefit, and of its — and therefore society's — composition.

One of the important prerequisites for a realization of democracy is equal distribution of opportunities to obtain information. Another condition of equal importance is that in a democratic society the information needed for decision-making is not concealed. Broadcasting activity which rests on an informational programme policy has the opportunity, in its function as a transmitter of information, to serve both of these requirements. This again means that broadcasting activity must not be harnessed to a system of political control.

3. The consciousness industry and democracy

by N-B. Stormbom

Practically every Finnish home has at least one radio receiver, and 80 % of households possess a TV set. The whole population lives within the reception area. The average Finn devotes a surprising amount of time to radio and television. He listens to the radio some two hours a day (although it must be admitted that about two thirds of this time is spent in non-concentrated background listening), and another two hours watching television.

In other words, the electronic media play a central role in Finnish society, and the same can be said of most societies in the developed part of the world. It is not an example of false pride on the part of those working in the field of these media, but merely a matter-of-fact observation, to say that radio and television occupy a special position compared to the other mass media. They owe this in part to their vast coverage and abundant transmission and in part to their apparently stronger impact. That this has been clearly perceived by various interest and pressure groups appears from the violence of the public debate around radio and television and programme policies during recent years. We may say that a fierce struggle is currently being waged as to who shall control the electronic media and how they shall be used; a struggle which has assumed great intensity in Finland, but which actually is taking place at this very moment in all parts of the world.

At the stage when what we call broadcasting started to move from theory to practice, there were those who

vaguely began to suspect the problems which might be involved. This was the case with political leaders in many countries. Of greatest concern were possibilities radio might conceivably offer as a tool in the pursuit of power. In various countries, different regulations were enacted, with the purpose of restricting broadcasting activity and protecting society (or wielders of power) from effects of broadcasting which might be considered dangerous. Organs were likewise established for the supervision of broadcasting activity. Their structure and composition varied from one country to another, but the thinking which underlay these measures was similar in many countries: the radio waves were considered the property of the nation, and they were to be used for the nation's best interests — however that might be defined in different societies and by different power-holders.

Today, following the intensive technological and quantitative expansion which the electronic media have undergone, it is tempting to call radio and television an industry for the production of non-material mass products; or, to use a term launched, and presumably invented, by the German writer and cultural critic Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, a 'consciousness industry' (Bewusstseinsindustrie). This term is used for the mass media in general, and for the electronic media, i.e. radio and television, in particular.

According to Enzensberger, throughout the developed technocratic social systems existing today, socialist as well as capitalist, democratic as well as authoritarian, a clear trend is observable toward the use of the mass media to control and guide the state of mind and opinions of the majority. This is the same as an attempt to perpetuate present hegemonies and social systems, to strengthen the position of the institutions and groups

at present in power, to prevent changes or development. Instead of the earlier material poverty, we are now threatened by the danger of spiritual poverty. The individual's freedom of choice and his possibility of affecting decision-making within society is becoming more and more illusory. This is true ever in democratically governed countries, where the banner of pluralism is very conspicously upheld. In reality there are, on the one hand, the masses of people without actual political influence, over whose heads decisions can be made allowing collective suicide — and on the other hand, an ever decreasing group in which all political power is concentrated. According to Enzensberger, we are moving towards a new oligarchy.

A majority of the people in the developed countries, with the exception of some desperately rebelling students and isolated hippie groups, are moderately resigned to this state of affairs, and accept it. Enzensberger blames this to a large extent on the exploitation of the consciousness industry. By this means the people can be offered, on the one hand, amusement and escape in the form of 'harmless' entertainment guaranteed conservative, and on the other hand one-sided or downright false information supporting the existing power structure. Information which is disadvantageous to the governing groups is suppressed.

One could perhaps claim that Enzensberger is exaggerating and overgeneralizing. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the tendency which he describes is clearly observable at least to some extent everywhere, although its strength and emphasis may vary. In a capitalist market-economy these mechanisms work in a slightly different way from a dictatorship with a socialist ideology. But they operate in both, and in both their purpose is the same: to cement the existing system so as to maintain the power structure, to obstruct the spreading of new 'dangerous' knowledge and criticism, to prevent the acquisition of information which might lead to alterations in the social structure.

Of some European countries with a democratic mode of government and a mixed economy — Finland perhaps not least of all — one can say that the various interest groups are at present fighting among themselves for the control of the electronic mass media like dogs over a juicy bone, with the aim of employing these media to gain the upper hand and thus ensure their own power position. Even if they do not achieve this aim completely, they can at least guard against the others' gaining advantages and make sure that nothing adverse to themselves and their goals comes to the knowledge of the public. This attitude — which unfortunately but indisputably prevails in our own beloved Finland — is far from the principle of free speech. We can talk about freedom of speech in a solemn voice during an election campaign, but in practice we hardly ever wish to grant it to any other than our own interest group, whether it be of an ideological, commercial or religious nature.

Representative and parliamentary democracy has undoubtedly, despite its weaknesses, been the best form of government invented or tested up to the present day from the point of view of the individual; it provides, on the average, the most freedom, security, justice, and means of influence. Nevertheless it is becoming more and more clear that in its present form it threatens to become too rigid and cumbersome to fulfil its function in highly developed and continually rapidly changing technocratic and industrialized societies. We seem, in fact, to be heading toward a state of affairs in which, despite democratic principles and regulation, decisions strongly affecting the individual's life and destiny are made by

a steadily decreasing circle, over the heads of the great majority. Even in countries with the firmest traditions and strongest regulations, democracy threatens to become more and more illusory and oligarchy more of a reality. And those to whose advantage it is to maintain and strengthen such a trend have found a first-rate weapon in the consciousness industry.

Is there a solution to this? Can democracy be developed in a more flexible, and at the same time more profound direction, so that it will offer and guarantee the individual real possibilities of affecting political decisions in today's and tomorrow's rapidly changing world? Or will the citizen become increasingly alienated, held together and disciplined by means of the consciousness industry's false world and untrue information, one of a puppet-like mass exploited without restriction for the good of the small political and economic governing group (until the day when nuclear war, catastrophic pollution or the exhaustion of natural recources brings a final solution to all problems)?

It is not possible here to go into more detail about the real meaning of this fundamental and highly intricate question. But let us assume at least as a working hypothesis that realistic possibilities of salvation still exist. In this case, and if Enzensberger's assertion that the consciousness industry functions as an important medium of mis-direction is true — which I believe it is — we are faced with the following question: How can this be corrected? How can the mass media, and in particular the electronic media be changed from a weapon in the hands of the oligarchy to a real servant of democracy?

The question can be approached from two points of view: individuality and universality.

Even today, a serious mistake made by many critically-

oriented intellectuals concerning the mass media, and in particular television, is to assume an unconditionally negative and thus sterile attitude toward these media. Any absolute criticism of the consciousness industry becomes meaningless and absurd. It is as absurd as a proposal to liquidate industrialized society as a whole. The only means for the individual who wishes to fight actively against the drawbacks of the consciousness industry is to enter into the game himself and try to work from the inside, taking advantage of the industry's own channels, its own conditions, and its own hidden conflicts.

The rapid development of the consciousness industry to a position of key importance in the modern world, says Enzensberger, radically changes the intellectual's social role position. Whether he likes it or not, even whether he is aware of it or not, he becomes an accomplice in this industry whose destiny depends on him just as his on it, and whose main tendency today, to reinforce the power of various authorities, is in conflict with his own wishes. He becomes an accomplice of the consciousness industry because he is necessary to it, and in time, it to him. Even if we could imagine a 'creative' individual, carefully guarding his moral inviolability, who individually succeeded in escaping the tentacles of the consciousness industry, this would not really in the long run be a gain, but rather the opposite. The only result would be that another would take his place, presumably one more opportunistic and less resistant, and the general tendency toward uniformity and power reinforcement would continue, perhaps at an increasing speed.

A creative intellectual who does not wish to submit to becoming a direct or indirect tool of oligarchical endeavour should not try to remain outside but in one

way or another become involved; but not without reservations, and not by allowing the system to corrupt him. He should, in a certain sense, sabotage his exploiters and their aims, insofar as their real objective is the preservation of prevailing power relations and the hindrance of continued democratic development.

In this way we might possibly reach a situation in which the role of the intellectual is no longer that of an accomplice in Enzensberger's sense, one in which he is no longer involved in furthering and perpetuating the oligarchy, does not allow others to do so, but helps guide the consciousness industry onto a road with signposts of freedom of information, open discussion, critical thought, intellectual activation of the public, arousal of the public to individual thinking commitment. The consciousness industry then becomes a medium of information instead of one of sedation, and the mass media become an instrument in the formation of realistic conditions for a rejuvenated democracy by widening the field of information and acquainting people with social developments and problems which face them[1].

1 The Hanko Round Table 'Communication in 1980', in its recommendations, listed the various ways in which intellectuals may contribute to the furthering of the informational approach ('defensive strategy in support of an informative communication policy'):
1. Maintenance of critical discussion of the principles of information transmission, i.e. emphasizing the importance of mass communication for the social structure (change as well as status quo), pointing out the manipulative mechanism, value boundedness of all information and communicators, ideological nature of commercialism, etc.
2. Persistent guerilla warfare within the media by participating in the production process.
3. Gradual interference within national and international bodies, developing organizational regulations.

If we wish to examine the relationship between the consciousness industry and democracy, we can start, for example, with the view taken by YLE's long-range planning in its programme policy deliberations. Broadcasting activity may be divided into three main categories according to the primary guiding motivation. The types are commercial, confessional and informational.

The *commercial* aspect of broadcasting is regulated by the financial structure and the ideology of the consumer society. The aim of the programmes is to draw as many consumers as possible to radio and television, so that advertisements, in other words incitement based on suggestion to buy a product, reach the largest possible audience. Commercially oriented and controlled mass media can never serve truly democratic aims, since the need to sell, characteristic of such activity, can never form a suitable basis for information transmission with the purpose of providing new knowledge significant to people's view of the world.

We can speak of *confessional* broadcasting when the starting point is the 'truth' as proclaimed by a particular social theory or experienced by a particular ideologically homogenous group. This type of media activity can also as be called authoritarian. It has generally arisen in societies where the social order is strongly centred in the hands of the political leadership. This leadership, whether it be a dictator, a government or a party, dictates the form of activity of the mass media and their programme

4. Introduction of critical study of mass communication and popular culture in schools.
5. Balancing critical research into the goals of mass communication with applied research into the means of getting the message through, e.g. introducing participatory models for citizen activity and strategies for feedback.

policies. Confessionally directed mass media also cannot work for truly democratic aims, because they transmit only such a world view as is consistent with the prevailing ideology and censor any material which is inconsistent with it.

Informational media activity tries deliberately to avoid the censorship which may result when confessional material of the foregoing type is part of broadcasting. This does not mean that such ideological 'truths' should be excluded; on the contrary they should also be included in informational broadcasting. It only means the necessity of avoiding ideological *censorship*. This is possible if broadcasting takes in various ideological views side by side, which thus cancel out each other's information barriers. The principles of informational mass communication should be derived from the general concept of information, which means that different world views are offered as alternative assumptions rather than as ideological truths.

It is apparent that the first two types of media activity, commercial and confessional, serve to perpetuate the prevailing systems and the need of those with power to retain it. Only the informational form of activity can in my opinion serve as a basis from which the mass media can offer the public the greatest possible amount of the most correct information about the world around them and its problems, and so lead to a broadening and deepening of democracy.

YLE has been purposefully aiming in this direction for the last few years. Something has perhaps been achieved, although the opposition of certain economic, religous and political power institutions and their leaders has been, and still is, severe. In order to secure these aims certain social measures are necessary, such as the revision of broadcasting legislation in a more progressive

spirit, but above all it requires a greatly increasing and deepening recognition, in politically active circles as well as society as a whole, of the nature of the truly democratic frame of mind: tolerance, permission of opinions and views other than one's own, an awareness of conflicts and discussion of problems, an attempt to make decisions on broad, accurate information, with the greatest possible number of people in the decision-making process.

How can this kind of awareness be spread? By taking advantage of the channels offered by the mass media. They are of course guarded by strong batallions: batallions made up of the tin soldiers of foolishness, the stooges of power and slippery careerists, idle phraseologists who have outlived their time. But even so the position is perhaps not entirely hopeless. The development of the past year justifies a cautious long-range optimism. Perhaps the day will really dawn when the consciousness industry will not obscure but clarify our awareness, making the public conscious and serving not an oligarchy but democracy. The battle over the direction and content of the mass media continues. It will characterize the seventies in Finland as in many other societies.

4. The mass media and freedom of speech

by Kaarle Nordenstreng

Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, approved on December 10, 1948, contains the following statement:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The same principle is repeated in the convention regarding human rights of the Council for Europe, and in the constitutions of most capitalist countries. According to § 10 of the Finnish constitution, "A citizen of Finland is entitled to freedom of speech and has the right to publish written or pictorial material, without any interference in advance. . ."

In the developed western nations, these principles of free speech have generally been considered to be adequately fulfilled in practice; people are allowed to have opinions, meetings are permitted, and there are modern mass media in great quantity for the effective diffusion of information. It is claimed that the free communication and unlimited discussion so essential to the democratic process are secured. This is, however, possible to show that in a country like this such a belief to a great extent unfounded.

Limitations on freedom of speech, it is true, do not appear glaringly in the form of outright restrictions on freedom of opinion or of gathering; people who have opinions are in principle quite free to hold them, as

pledged by the letter of the law. It is another matter that in practice the spirit of the law is not fulfilled. A system of child-rearing and education which strives towards conformity does not in general permit differences of opinion to arise, and even if such differences were to appear, 'public opinion' and the power system in society do not reward non-conformity; the individual who thinks differently from the rest is condemned to martyrdom.

Freedom of speech, however, is limited even more essentially by the lack of media of expression; no matter what opinions an individual might have, and how heroically he might express them, it is not at all sure that the 'any means whatsoever' promised by the Declaration of Human Rights will be available. The fulfilment of freedom of speech depends in the final analysis on the extent to which people who think differently have access to channels of expression such as radio, television, literature, the press and the film. In all Western European countries, for example, the proportion of the journalistic press available to those voting for working class (socialist) parties is considerably less than what the proportion of this group in society would warrant. In Finland the ratio of the non-socialist press (including independent commercial newspapers) and the socialist press is 9:1, compared to corresponding power relations in parliament of roughly 5:5.

But this still deals with only one aspect of the matter: man's right to diffuse information. The Declaration of Human Rights also promises the right to receive and acquire information without restriction. The public mass media also occupy a key position as suppliers of information; freedom of speech depends on the exhaustiveness of the information which the media offer us concerning the world in which we live.

Deficiencies in freedom of speech are perhaps most easily observed in connection with the supply of information. In the first place, some two thirds of mankind — almost the whole of the Third World — lack decent mass media. Secondly: a considerable proportion of the media of the developed part of the world function under the strict control of the political authorities, diffusing primarily a particular political ideology and only secondarily offering information. This is the case, for example, in the Soviet Union and Greece. Thirdy the supply of information is obviously inadequate even in the so-called free world, for the simple reason that information is not obtained without effort. The picture obtained both of the receiver's own country and of other countries will be severely deficient if it is based exclusively on 'automatic' sources of information — the official and visible information contained in statements by the government or by various interest groups or in news agency reports, all of which are relatively superficial and random. The news offerings of these sources are concentrated around crisis situations, war and natural catastrophes, and if we restrict ourselves to what these have to offer our eyes will remain shut to the silent process of change taking place both in our own society and elsewhere, in particular the Third World.

This last deficiency will be remedied only when the mass media have available systematically collected information not only about 'world events', but also about the invisible development underlying these events. This requires a correspondent network covering the whole world evenly, together with competent expertise in the analysis of information. Such analysis is already

practiced by the mass media of various countries in their news commentaries. But the process by which information is obtained from the fields is still glaringly unsystematic; the international news agencies concentrate on obtaining and providing the kind of 'top' news material which is bought and thus satisfies the prevailing very narrow criteria of 'news value'. This means news restricted chiefly to the western world, with attention turned to the Third World only in situations of war or natural upheaval. On the other hand, even the wealthy mass media of a large country cannot afford to span the entire world with their own correspondent network. One remedy which has been suggested for this problem would be a supranational and non-commercial news agency connected with the United Nations.

The establishment of a United Nations news agency, desirable as it would be from the point of view of the the Declaration of Human Rights and that of the mass media of different countries — not least the developing nations — seems highly unlikely. It is very much to be expected that the political interests of the member nations, and in particular of the superpowers, would suffer occasionally from many-sided and thorough transmission of information. The conceptions of different countries concerning unbiased information and the right to suppress or diffuse it still differ too much to allow even the drawing up of international rules for free communication, not to mention adherence to such rules.

The obtaining of international information is thus seriously impaired by its involvement in various political systems. This is of course very understandable from the point of view of the states which attempt to restrict communication; the free flow of information both in and out of the country would involve changes in the way of thinking both of the country's own citizens

and in the rest of the world, and the entire ideology and the *status quo* in foreign policy would be endangered. Power is often based in practice on the suppression of information.

There is, on the other hand, some evidence that at least the political élites of different countries want to obtain the most complete possible information, since an estimate of a situation which is based on false information may nowadays easily lead either to fateful consequences (i.e. the use of nuclear weapons), or at the very least to a loss of prestige. To the political élite everywhere, the free manifold flow of information may be a source of considerable possible evil, but it is also of crucial necessity; otherwise there would exist no intelligence agencies such as the CIA and KGB. We may thus realistically expect that in an increasing number of countries this value will be allowed to benefit others besides the wielders of power. Such a development would mean a democratization of the political process, since information is one of the essential prerequisites of democracy.

Political interest and ideological boundaries, however, are not only factors preventing the individual from obtaining many-sided and exhaustive information from the mass media. Even in those countries in which the media are in principle free of control by political power, commercial control ensures that the supply of information in restricted. The self-styled 'free media' in a western country such as Finland often function within fairly narrow limits, particularly in describing the events taking place in their own society; they tell about matters in which the producers assume the public will be interested, and which in practice also guarantee the largest possible audience. The commercial point of view restricts the supply of information in two ways: first,

information in which only few are interested is avoided in favour of information in which many are interested, and secondly, the themes and points of view from which 'possibly interesting' topics are selected are limited to those selected by a socially highly restricted group, that of publishers and journalists.

The commercial system of control appears in principle to be a highly democratic one. This conclusion, however, becomes extremely questionable when it is shown by research that the information offered by the mass media is not a simple consequence of demand, but that, on the contrary, demand follows supply, and the mass media have themselves taught people to ask for what they claim to want. Other studies have shown that the practitioners' conceptions of what people really think and want are frequently quite divorced from reality (as are their views of society and the world in general). Oversimplifying, we might say that with the commercial mass media the individual has the 'right' to receive such information as the producers have taught him to consume.

'Commercial democracy' is a particularly dubious concept from the point of view of minority group rights; in tailoring their offerings to the taste of the majority, the media restrict the right of all those who think differently to get what they want. The lack of financial support (or of time and space) makes it impossible to provide an abundant supply for all conceivable ways of thinking. It should be noted that minority groups with large numbers of members can improve their own position in this respect by establishing their own media, which may even become financially profitable. This has taken place for example in the United States, as demonstrated by *Ramparts*. In a small country, on the other hand, minority groups will always be numerically insignificant

and easily fall victims of undue neglect under a system of commercial mass media.

In spite of its apparent democracy, the purely commercial organization of mass communication has not proved adequate even in the United States; it has been considered necessary to establish a parallel system of non-profit educational television, with the object of expanding the information supply made available to every citizen. In Europe, the problems of commercial mass communication are not so urgent, since broadcasting here is generally officially free of commercial influence. It would, however, be untrue to claim that the commercial way of thinking — serving the public by offering it what it has first been brought to demand — does not colour European broadcasting to a considerable extent, even though this broadcasting operates in theory on the principle of social responsibility. This way of thinking is an integral part of our culture, in which we are inclined to follow the view of the majority no matter what it is, and to reject all 'manipulation' and 'supervision'.

This is not to say that European radio and television programmes do not offer a broad range of information, not only on topics favoured by the majority and following generally accepted values, but also on topics and opinions of interest to minority groups. The principle of commercially based service to the majority has probably been most clearly rejected in England and in Finland; the guidelines for the broadcasting companies in these countries formulate as one of the central tasks of broadcasting the bringing out of new phenomena and ideas which are of interest to minority groups. The objective here is to secure freedom of speech from the point of view of information supply; the individual's right to obtain information is to be ensured by providing

the most manifold and fresh view of the world possible. It is amusing to note that the realization of such a line in practice, in the so-called new YLE line, has been considered by certain people to be left-wing brainwashing or outright restriction of freedom of speech. It can nevertheless be shown that Finnish radio and television programmes have never before offered such a broad spectrum of information as now; objectively speaking, all the accusations levelled at the broadcasting company are directed at the exact opposite of the ostensible target.

Non-commercial media such as YLE, striving to provide many-sided information, may fairly be accused of one 'fault': they do not automatically trust in man's desire or ability to find out the information he needs through other channels, but aim at covering, within the limits of their own activity, the entire informational field as fully as possible. They take the freedom of speech clause of the Declaration of Human Rights literally. The policy which follows from such principles may justifiably be called radical or manipulative, since it means that the communicator assumes an active role; communication like this no longer passively reflects society, proclaiming only what comes forth more or less automatically, but undoubtedly does mean some 'interference' with the functioning of the system.

Commercial mass media, adapted to prevailing conditions, often appear to satisfy the demands of freedom of speech irreproachably, since the public is by definition satisfied with what they have to offer. It is, however, dangerous to believe that the emotionally-based satisfaction of the public is a guarantee of satisfactory supply of information; the mass media, as we know, are able to transmit not only information but also entertainment and feeling. It would even seem the

provision of many-sided information in society — i.e. literal conformity to the Declaration of Human Rights — tends to cause insecurity and anxiety rather than satisfaction; the complexity of life and the magnitude of the problems brought out often bring unhappiness to the individual secure in his own little world. It is precisely people like this who cause the 'free', commercial media to give up offering many-sided information and limit themselves on one hand to superficial news, frequently emphasizing irrelevant aspects such as 'human interest' or personalities, and on the other to relaxing entertainment which usually reflects a highly limited area of life. This material all tends very much to the same end: to pacify and relax the individual amidst everything that happens in the world.

The insecurity arising from many-sided information is probably due more to an inability to understand the world and articulate one's experience rationally than to the information itself. It would even seem that in the long run the best guarantee for a feeling of security lies precisely in the appropriation of information. Only by accepting information and making it one's own can the feeling of being at the mercy of events or the anxiety based on false ideas be eliminated. The providing of many-sided information aims in fact at a 'new security', based on consistent information.

Thus the commercial system of control easily leads in a direction which from the point of view of free communication is regressive. The mass media generally do not take responsibility for this trend; after all, they can always show that they are fulfilling important functions from the point of view of society, such as the provision of entertainment or of advertising. Furthermore, in principle they are perfectly justified in denying their obligation of providing many-sided information,

since people can always turn to other and 'better' media. Since, however, we know that a great majority of people content themselves passively with the daily offerings of the media and in particular of television, such reasoning is sophistry, and becomes downright unethical in a situation in which there are no other media available to the majority of the population, offering a more varied informational supply, such as is general in small or developing nations.

In any case, it should be pointed out that under all circumstances the adoption of commercial principles of communication is a moral act in itself, regardless of the fact that the narrowness of the informational range offered can be explained as the result of a 'democratic process of choice' and can be blamed on the consumer audience. We may well ask whether commercial communication does not end up as even more outright manipulation and 'paternalism' than does communication aiming at providing many-sided information, even if it is less visible in the former case. Putting the issue in its extreme form, we may say that the one satisfies people's immediate needs and teaches them not to need many-sided information, while the other ensures the availability of information without caring about people's feelings in the short run.

The right to diffuse information: the dilemma of freedom of speech

The limitations on freedom of speech have been approached above from the point of view of the supply of information which is provided by the media, i.e. starting from the individual's right to obtain and receive information. In the following, we shall shift to the other

aspect of the principle of freedom of speech, the individual's right to diffuse information by means of the mass media. Here we immediately encounter the same limitations on free speech which also restrict the supply of information; the non-availability of the mass media (in the developing nations), political supervision (totalitarian countries) or the indirect control exercised by the commercial structure. The first two cases are more or less trivial and uninteresting, although they certainly do not exercise less influence. On the other hand, the developed capitalist country, with its 'free' media, can offer certain very interesting problems in the individual's freedom of speech as it appears in practice.

First of all, in a society of this type we find an indirect but consistent system of regulation by the 'bourgeois hegemony' over free speech; of the situations of power, the institutions or the media which can be used to influence public or private opinion, a considerably larger number is controlled by those of a conservative way of thinking than by those of progressive convictions. This point of view is very close to the limitations on commercial communication which we analysed above in connection with the supply of information; the mass media represent chiefly the point of view of the owning and governing class, and the public is so used to this that it does not know how to demand anything else. The effect of this hegemony does not manifest itself very strikingly in the use of the mass media only because the same system of control is characteristic to a great extent of the entire society. There is no need to turn huge crowds of people offering deviant information away from the doors of editorial offices, for the simple reason that such crowds do not exist.

The manifestation of the 'bourgeois hegemony' — or for that matter of any other hegemony — in mass

communication is an instructive example of the more general and fundamental conflict between the free mass media and the individual citizen; on one hand, everyone should have an equal right to diffuse opinions and information by means of the mass media, while on the other the media should be free to choose the information to be offered, without external pressure. Without access to the channels of information the individual does not have full freedom of speech, just as there would be no freedom of the press without the right to independent publication.

This conflict between the freedom of expression of the individual and of the media is pushed to extremes in the case of purely commercially organised communication, as has happened in the United States. A number of recent cases leading to lawsuits (e.g. the attempt to prevent the erecting of placards opposing the war in Vietnam in New York subway stations) have shown that in attempting to preserve their independence of the government by appealing to the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech, the media at the same time deny this freedom to those with whom they disagree or to those whose ideas they do not consider, for some reason, it worthwhile to devote column space or broadcasting time.

The statements of lawyers attempting to resolve this conflict have repeated the same thing that is expressed indirectly in the principle of freedom of speech: just as important as the right to free speech itself is providing the conditions under which freedom of speech can be realised. In practice, however, the interest of the media has usually won out, since such conditions have not been guaranteed for the individual even though they exist for the media. This system has effectively supported the 'bourgeois hegemony' in America, as argued by

Jerome Barron in his article 'Access to the Press — a New First Amendment Right':

> Ideas are being denied admission into the media until they are first disseminated in a way that challenges and disrupts the social order. They then may be discussed and given notice. But this process should work the other way around.[1]

Essentially the same ideas were brought out already in the 1920's, by Walter Lippman in his book Public Opinion.

The remedy proposed for this problem by Barron, Lippman and a number of others is, paradoxically enough, the restriction of the independence — the freedom — of the media by obliging them to publish the views of as many individuals and groups as possible, and by offering the broadest possible range of information; in practice these are two aspects of the same thing. Such an arrangement, which corresponds basically to the broadcasting principles adopted in Finland, is thought to provide the best guarantee for the realization of freedom of speech, not only in principle and from the point of view primarily of the media themselves, but specifically in practice and from the point of view of the entire society.

It is nevertheless clear that the elimination of commercial principles of communication will not entirely do away with the conflict between the media and the individual citizen. This conflict undoubtedly exists also in media systems striving toward many-sided information and based primarily on the principles of free speech, if only because it is impossible in practice to publish all the opinions found at any given moment due to lack of space or time. From this point of view, freedom of speech can probably never be fully realized.

1 *Harvard Law Review*, May 1967.

Thus in practice even in the freest system of communication the media have a certain power over the individual. This fact emphasizes the responsibility of those with control over the media and their messages in making sure that the principle of free speech is complied with. If the broadly based circulation of information and opinions is hindered, this is the fault of the media; thus e.g. the committee investigating the problems of civil rights in the United States has accused the mass media of the country of rejecting the points of view of the coloured population.

There is, however, one more aspect of the situation which indirectly limits the freedom of expression of the individual, and places the producer in an ever more central position as regulator of freedom of expression, and this is professionalism; the fact that certain individuals have specialized in the use of the mass media, whereas the so-called man in the street, even given access to the media, is unable to express his views effectively. Only the producers have complete mastery over the communication machinery; other people are to a great extent at the mercy of this bureaucratic structure.

The conflict between professionalism and the simple wish to say something is manifested, for example, in the fact that the message must usually be condensed and abridged for the media. The editors' skill with their scissors has become legendary, but it must also be seen as a violation of freedom of speech. Editors and programme producers are usually masters of the linguistic usage which will appeal to the public at large, and they have the ascendance of the technically skilled professional over representatives of other fields.

It would nevertheless be unreasonable to blame the editors and producers exclusively for the ordinary citizen's lack of opportunity to pour out his whole

heart through the mass media, or for the fact that the scientist is not allowed to explain his work to the public in all its complexity. Excessive verbosity or thoroughness would lead to a situation in which the message no longer reached its destination; in a case where no effort at all was made to reduce the material to a level more comprehensible to the average audience, the result would actually conflict with freedom of speech, since a majority of the audience would probably lack the prerequisites for comprehending the programme. In this case again we encounter an insoluble conflict in the realization of freedom of expression.

It is difficult to conceive of a system under which the freedom of speech article would be fully realized. A great deal nevertheless remains to be done to make it more widely fulfilled than is at present the case. Satisfactory media systems can be built in the Third World; media presently under political control can be opened up to less restricted communication; and even the indirect control exercised by commercial and professional interests can be reduced.

In spite of all the obstacles in its path, freedom of expression seems to be constantly increasing in the world, like a natural phenomenon, due evidently to the fact that from the point of view of human cultural evolution in the long run the diffusion of information is meaningful; knowledge has demonstrated its supremacy over ignorance. There is thus cause for optimism. That the truth may not be forgotten, however, there is also cause for realistic pessimism: complete freedom of speech is and will remain an illusion.

5. Extension of the senses: an audience point of view

by Kaarle Nordenstreng

The average Finnish citizen is awake sixteen hours a day. Of this time, five hours, i.e. almost one third, is spent in contact with the mass media: listening to the radio, watching television, reading a newspaper, magazine or book. The information which flows into our minds during the day is thus not limited to the circumference encompassed by our own senses; on the contrary, for as much as one third of our waking time we use the mass media as extensions of our senses and thus maintain contact with the world outside our immediate field of vision.

For the most part, this 'sensory extension' takes the form of radio listening or television viewing; the average time devoted by Finns to these two media alone is four hours daily. These four hours are naturally not spent in concentrated attention on the radio or TV set alone, but merely in maintaining some degree of contact, whether the sound and picture form the centre of our attention or serve merely as background effect.

Thus we keep these extensions of our senses 'on tap' for a relatively large span of time during the day, but we give them our full attention only at specified intervals. And these intervals are determined by the listener, viewer or reader himself; the mass media audience is normally anything but a class in the schoolroom, which has no choice but to listen to the teacher's voice.

In one respect, however, the individual reading the paper, listening to the radio or watching television in his living-room does resemble the pupil in the school-

room — or at least the model pupil: he has a thirst for information and a strong desire to form a picture of the world. Man's basic nature would seem to be such that he must form for himself, in one way or another, an articulated image of the world in which he lives; this is the conclusion arrived at independently both by psychology and by communication research. The individual who does not have some sort of overall conception of the world revealed to him by his senses suffers from a sense of insecurity; his entire existence feels threatened.

The maintenance of basic sense of security is one of man's most important biological needs, along with the need for food. It is thus not a matter of indifference how strong and how detailed an overall view of the world the individual is able to establish for himself.

The creation and adaption of the individual's world view

The way in which the individual establishes such a world view for himself apparently differs fundamentally from, say, the way in which a jigsaw puzzle is assembled. Man's view of the world is not formed as a simple sum of various pieces of information, but is based on a more or less arbitrarily selected inner vision, a complex of beliefs and assumptions. This inner vision is naturally not created out of nothing; it is constructed out of the individual's experiences. But it is important to note that our view of the world is not a simple copy of the information transmitted to us by our senses, but rather the result of a process of creative thinking, comparable to a work of art created by the imagination, describing the world around the individual.

In order to make his sense of security as impregnable as possible, the world view created by the individual must be as simple and clearcut as possible. Since this

picture is created with the help of the imagination, it practically never corresponds to reality. In particular when the individual comes into contact with a new environment, experiences new things and encounters new people, the world view based on his previous experience easily comes into conflict with the new information transmitted by his senses. The world around us is unavoidably in a constant state of flux, tending towards increasing plurality, even if we ourselves are standing still.

In such circumstances, the individual must either reject the new information or form for himself a new world view, one better adapted to the new information coming in. The continued rejection of new information over a longer span of time, however, leads to increased insecurity, since the individual still senses that the world is not quite the way he imagines it; for this reason, the latter alternative, that of establishing a new world view, is more common. We are thus faced with a continuous irresolvable conflict; on one hand we have a need for a clear-cut and unshakeable world image, while on the other we are unable to reject the new information which is constantly impinging on us from outside.

In this connection it is useful to schematically divide human psychology into two levels: first thoughts controlled by the individual himself, and second, externally-controlled conditioned learning. The former is a prerequisite for language learning, for example, and also for a capacity for critical evaluation, while the latter corresponds to manipulation, i.e. the individual being directed without himself being able to make decisions. We may now say that what happens as new information penetrates into the world view of an individual is critical cognition: it is like an earthquake establishing re-evaluation, in other words intellectual activation. On the

other hand, hardly any spontaneous and autonomous cognition takes place through externally-directed manipulative thinking; the individual only follows the thoughts offered him.

The media which function as extensions of the senses are naturally very efficient as transmitters of new experiences; they provide the informational building stones for rational decision-making. In serving this function, the media operate at the same time as enemies of the already established world view. But the media need not be used for the transmission of new information; they can naturally also be applied to the repetition of already familiar things, thus reinforcing the old world view and strengthening people's sense of security. In that case, we use the extensions of our senses for the purpose of re-learning an already familiar environment, a review and repetition of earlier experience; the media reflect, as it were, the past.

Basic questions of mass communication policy

The fundamental question of communication policy is in fact precisely this: which do we want to give priority, the reinforcement of prevailing ways of thinking and strengthening of man's momentary sense of security, or the transmission of new information which will inevitably disturb the old view of the world? The latter alternative may lead to temporary increase in insecurity, but on the other hand the new world view, based on more comprehensive information, is better equipped to receive and assimilate further information about the world.

This question cannot be settled by appealing to the audience concerned, since people attach importance both to entertainment which reinforces the feeling of

security and new information which gnaws away at the old world view. The right decision, in fact, is not to be found in the needs of the individual but in those of the whole society; we must think of what is best for the entire community formed by the media audience.

The so-called informational programme policy adopted in recent years in Finnish broadcasting policy, which defines the transmission of new information as the primary function of radio and television, is based on the principles of democracy. For democracy to function people must have information; information about the society and political activity carried on by their elected representatives. If such information is not available, the individual will become alienated from reality, and cease to develop; he will come to a standstill in the midst of a changing world. And what is most important, in the absence of information man is incapable of independent decision; he can be led at anybody's will, without even being aware of it.

A current issue: passivity or alienation of the audience

In the debate on radio and television programmes particularly, there has been a lot of talk recently about alienation, and it has been claimed the audience is alienated from the programmes. This state of affairs is borne out by research. Most recently, a field survey made by 40 YLE journalists showed that people quite generally felt programmes conveyed the world in a way strange to them, and that producers don't always think of the lines along which the man in the street's thinking runs.

To show that the problem of alienation is no new phenomenon, here is an article written by Veikko Pietilä, Researcher in Communications at Tampere University. This is part of an introductory discourse made at a seminar for YLE news journalists in 1967:

Not many read a newspaper to find out what has really happened or organize and control their view of the world on the basis of this information; more often it is right to feel that they belong to something, whether this be a restricted environment or the whole world. This need for contact is very close to the concept of alienation. Without doubt those who in one way or another feel themselves isolated from their social environment and whose normal contacts are weak or unsatisfactory often seek a substitute for these in the mass media. . . . Alienation also includes the feeling that the world cannot be controlled. According to Morris Seeman, the individual's state of alienation is indicated by the fact that he feels unable to control and organize his world, a world in which anything can happen for any reason and without any single individual being able to do anything about it. . . . This uncertainty can be resolved by withdrawing from the sphere of information which demonstrates this state of affairs to him, i.e. by avoiding the mass media either completely or at least concerning information which would reinforce this state. But there are also alienated individuals who use the mass media even more than average; for them the content of the news is indifferent, what matters is a fixed point in life. These alienated and high news consuming individuals were the most disturbed during TV and newspaper strikes.

Again, Pekka Peltola's 'Report from beyond the Village', published 1969, gives the following:

It turned out that, although people followed news broadcasts with concentration, interest and confidence in the reliability of the message, most of them did not even understand the content of news items which concerned themselves directly. Thus for example a widow who listened to a programme concerning the family pension did not understand what she had heard; she did not even realize that the new law meant an addition of almost 200 marks to her own monthly income in the immediate future. In talking about the matter, she said that she usually asked or heard about such things from a certain neighbour. While the respondents generally had fairly vague ideas concerning general problems, there was one thing about which a clear and consistent answer was given: 'the ordinary man has nothing to say about what the high-ups in Helsinki decide in matters concerning us all'. The worst of it is that they seem to have been right.
This alienation from matters of general concern was so extreme that the interviewer had to give up using the term 'participation', since it was unfamiliar to the people in this sense. It turned out that the lack of interest in, or comprehension of programmes of general importance was due to precisely this factor. People were not interested in questions in which they felt they had no say, even if the issues concerned themselves quite directly.

Alienation is thus *manifested* in the fact that messages are not comprehended, even though programmes are closely, even compulsively, followed. But alienation is not at all *due to* the complexity of the issues commented on, or the difficulty of the language used, although these factors naturally increase alienation and thus prevent its elimination.

What is central to the problem of alienation is thus not the relationship between the broadcasting company and the audience, but that between the audience and the society. The core of the matter lies in the isolation of the individual, without the possibility of influencing what happens to him, overpowered by a sense of helplessness and uncertainty. A great deal has been written, from Marx to Fromm, about this typical scourge of the industrialized welfare state and about its causes. The situation will evidently improve only when the private individual feels that he has the power to influence the decisions which affect him — an argument frequently repeated in recent discussion concerning the democratization of society. Thus the mass media should also offer a wide ranging and factually based view of the world and provide information concerning the channels available to the individual citizen for participating in the decisions which concern him.

The media can go in one of two directions with regard

to the problem of alienation. They can either give momentary relief to the symptoms of alienation by repeating familiar and entertaining material. Or they may offer man the means of conquering his state of alienation by providing facts about society and about ways of participating in the political and economic process.

We must point out that neither one of these basic alternatives *creates* alienation, since this occurs in society regardless of the activity of the mass media. On the other hand, it is evident that the former policy, that of lulling the audience into a feeling of security, will not at any rate reduce alienation, but rather will tend to increase it, while the second alternative, that of 'the painful truth', at least offers the preconditions for a healing of alienation. At the same time, this kind of informational programme policy *makes visible* the alienation prevailing in society; people, as it were, awaken to a perception of their own state, and with the help of the information they receive they are able to chart their position in society. The programme policy of the familiar refrain, on the other hand, keeps the problem of alienation out of sight, and diffuses the image of an unreal idyll over society.

Communication and democratic control

While we stress the significance of broadly based information and communication for a democratic society, we should point out that in a certain sense communication stands in conflict with the principles of democracy. The truth or falsity of a given piece of information — concerning, for instance, a case of treason or a discovery of one — does not depend on the number of people aware of the fact concerned. Thus the legitimacy of a piece of information should not be decided

in the same way that public affairs — i.e. matters of state or local administration — are decided in a parliamentary democracy, that is by a voting procedure and majority rule.

If factual information were treated in the same way as administrative differences of opinion, a vote would always have to be taken concerning the truth of a given statement, and only such information as was considered 'true' by the majority would be allowed. This actually took place at the time of Galileo, when the majority considered it 'true' that the earth was the centre of the solar system. It also happens in many cases in our day, although this is sometimes difficult to observe. Thus information concerning factual events or phenomena should be kept carefully separate from all parliamentary power relations. Democratic parliamentarianism is only a way of governing — not at all a way of seeking the truth.

What was said above, concerning the attitude of the old world view toward new information, should be borne in mind: in spite of all his healty curiosity, man seems at first to have a tendency to reject new information. The individual's world view changes and becomes more realistic only gradually, under the continuous pressure of new information. If we establish the rule that the majority makes the decisions about communication, including the 'truth' of the information transmitted by radio and television, the result will unavoidably be a policy which rejects new information and prefers to concentrate its efforts on supporting the old view of the world.

The new information transmitted by the extensions of our senses, and a continually developing and changing view of the world, thus are part of a healthy democracy. The people who live in such a society are perhaps not

overly happy, but they are in any case their own masters; they are aware of their own actions. The mass media can promote such awareness just as effectively as they can prevent it.

6. Who determines public opinion?

by Kaarle Nordenstreng

The concept of public opinion can be a misleading one: it is often used to 'sell' something which is not genuinely found in people's minds. There are two possible techniques of misrepresentation. First, some arbitrary opinion — usually one's own — may simply be called 'public opinion', thus acquiring a more impressive character; this is an old tool of propaganda.

The second misleading application of the term public opinion is shrewder and thus more difficult to perceive: a survey is taken, to be sure, of the views found among the public (by means of opinion polls for example), but the trains of thought and the underlying information on which the individual opinions are based are simply ignored. In other words, opinions are exploited which are more or less deliberately implanted in the public, i.e. *manipulated* ideas. Here we shall concentrate on this second strategy, since at present it is probably both more widely used and more significant in its effects.

Opinion polls: the illusion of democracy

What is public opinion? In this age of opinion polling, most people would probably answer this question by reference to opinion surveys and interviews, such as are encountered daily in the press, radio and television. At least those who due to their education or their position attempt to base their decisions on 'scientific facts' — e.g. political decision-makers — are more and more inclined to take into account the 'voice of the

people', as discovered by means of opinion polls. Seen from afar, this procedure seems quite democratic, but upon closer analysis it is illusory to a very great extent; a parody of democracy, and frequently even deliberately used as a means of manipulating the public.

The picture of public opinion given for example by a survey report in the form of a newspaper article is usually far from the reality — the ideas entertained by people — which it is trying to describe. On the way from people's minds to the columns of the paper, distortion takes place at three different points: the choice and formulation of questions put to the respondent, the interview situation, and finally the formulation of the results in the editorial office. The total distortion may be so great that the 'results' described in the article may be the exact reverse of the original reality.

Since the decisions made in society have come to be based more and more on the results of opinion surveys as described in the press, it is understandable that such surveys have begun to receive critical attention. Not because in the spirit of genuine democracy an effort is made to sound the opinions of the citizens concerning the political alternatives of the moment, but because opinion polls in their traditional form have frequently shown themselves to be useless as a means toward this end. It has furthermore become increasingly apparent that the whole idea of democracy realized through the constant sounding of public opinion is a lame one, unless the public has available a constant supply of many-sided information as the basis for its opinions.

At the point when the sub-editor writes up the article reporting on the results of the survey, there are innumerable ways in which he can slant the impression which the reader will receive; public opinion is literally controlled by the sub-editor. The usual tendency is for

him to look for something 'new', such as a change in party support structure, which easily leads to a distorted view of the results as a whole: a change of one or two per cent in the support given to a particular party may be singled out as the major point of the article, even though statistically such a change usually is insignificant.

A good example of the opportunities open to the sub-editor in this respect is offered by the American psychologist Milton Rokeach who sharply criticises opinion polls and their publication in the press.[1] He cites the 1968 article in the *New York Times* in which the answers obtained from Americans to the following question were presented: 'What is the most important problem facing this community today?' The conclusion arrived at was that the most important problem was crime and lawlessness, while for example racial problems were relegated to eighth place. A closer analysis of the results showed, however, that the topic of concern which had thus risen to the top was a bundle of numerous different forms of crime, and Rokeach suggests that the race question would have come to the foreground in the same way if all its components — slums, unemployment, housing conditions and educational opportunities — had been combined in a similar fashion. In this case, the original source of distortion was in the research itself, but the newspaper was nevertheless responsible for letting this misleading 'result' through so uncritically, furnished with an even more misleading headline.

Rokeach concludes with a very unpalatable observation from the point of view of both editor and researcher:

1 The role of values in public opinion research, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, winter 1968—1969.

This sort of Aesopian language places both pollster and journalist in the position of bedfellows trying to defend or to reinforce the values of the *statues quo* under the guise of publishing objective reports designed to 'inform the public'.

The transmutation of 'public opinion' practiced by the researcher, like that of the editor, is based on his individual values. The effect of these values can be perceived already in the issues to which he directs his attention; whether he asks for the respondent's opinions concerning health or sickness, lawlessness or legislative weaknesses, the comforts of life or social evils, etc. The researcher's own values also quite literally affect the way in which he formulates his questions: words used, whether the question is in positive or negative form, etc. These factors play a significant part in the final results; it has been shown that the respondents' answers often depend more on the linguistic form in which the question is presented than on the actual content or subject of the question.

From the point of view of the respondent, the basic problem seems to be that he usually does not have any clear opinion already worked out concerning the issue in question. The researcher has usually formulated his questions in considerable detail, in order to avoid ambiguity, but has perhaps forgotten to take into account the possibility that the respondent may not have the slightest idea concerning these details — in fact, he may be hearing about them for the first time at the interview. Since, however, he does not want to answer 'I don't know', at least to all questions, he states as his considered opinion whatever comes into his mind at first impression. After thinking about the matter more closely, and discussing it with others, he may come to the exactly opposite conclusion, but from the point of view of opinion research it is too late; he has

already traced his line in the map of 'public opinion'.

Opinion polls thus tend to 'extort' unnatural alternatives from respondents who actually have no opinion about the matter — alternatives the meaning of which is clear to the researcher but not to the respondent. This factor has had attention drawn to it by another American scholar, Alex Edelstein, in an as yet unpublished paper. He points out, for example, that less than half of the Americans he interviewed in 1968 had any clear idea as to how the Vietnam war should be stopped, and that the majority of these had thought of at most two alternatives for dealing with the Vietnam situation. At the same time, nevertheless, regular opinion polls were published in the press demonstrating the breakdown of public opinion in the United States with regard to numerous different strategies for getting out of the war.

Edelstein in fact criticizes the polls for their inability to measure people's *spontaneous opinions*, based on their own thinking. Instead, they merely sound the respondent's *toleration;* the extent to which they will accept the statement formulated by the pollster. The results thus do not in fact reflect people's own opinions at all, but rather their attitude of 'Why not?' It is obvious that 'complete agreement' and agreement based on such indifferent acceptance are two very different things, but in the polls they merge into one. If the reader of the results is not aware of this, he will receive an inaccurate picture of public opinion; and if this happens to a sufficiently important reader in a sufficiently critical situation — such as the President of the United States in connection with foreign policy decisions — public opinion polls may literally mislead the entire world.

For the sake of accuracy, it must be said here that not all opinion polls are equally dubious. In the case

of matters closely involved in everyday life, such as foodstuffs or the business hours of shops, people do have highly developed explicit opinions which they have worked out in advance. But when it comes to social issues — such as economic stabilisation, democracy in the schools or subsidies to the press — most people have only a very vague idea of the issue involved and no specific opinion at all.

When the issue involved is one of general interest, in which the respondent himself has no personal experience, what the polls bring out is not 'public opinion' but 'common' or 'accepted belief'. There is a great deal of the latter in modern society, and attempts are even made to create such beliefs — usually under the term 'image' — mechanically, by means of advertising. It is important to note that in many instances people have to depend exclusively on these beliefs, frequently in matters which seem familiar. When such issues are involved, a person is very ready to give his answer to the interviewer, but we must remember that what he says is not his opinion — a point of view based on intellectual consideration of the issues involved — but merely a belief, assimilated externally 'from the air', and based on vague general impressions.

When people answer the interviewer on the basis of their beliefs, this is of course welcome to the source of the belief; they find that the seed has produced a harvest and that there is no disturbing influence in the ground. From the point of view of the people concerned, however, this is manipulation and indoctrination; people have been put to serve someone's purposes without having any real possibility of influencing events. In theory of course this opportunity is open to them, since the statement of one's 'opinion' is voluntary.

The outwardly democratic appearance of this kind

of mechanism for obtaining 'the voice of the people' is glaringly false. Upon closer analysis it is seen to be the reverse of democracy, since it cleverly bypasses the very essence of democracy: the opportunity for people to decide their own affairs. This will not be possible until people have information concerning their own affairs based on independent thinking. For precisely this reason, communication maybe the most important prerequisite for an extension of democracy. And it is for precisely this reason, likewise, that the transmission of more manifold information has been opposed by those who up to now have predigested ideas for people and marketed them as promising beliefs — beliefs which have been measured by means of opinion polls.

The prevailing climate of thought and independent thinking

In studying public opinion on social and political issues of general interest — such attitudes as toward national defence or the Common Market — it has been found such public opinion is not by any means based on the independent thinking of private individuals. What is called the public opinion prevailing among people is frequently a relatively autonomous phenomenon, unrelated to independent intellectual activity on the part of individual members of the society; it rather directs the ideas of individuals than is directed by them. We may speak of a 'climate of opinion', which affects the individual from outside and tempts him to take a particular attitude without the trouble of independent thinking which would lead to an autonomous decision. This climate of opinion feeds people ready-made opinions from outside, as it is sometimes said of traditional educational methods, instead of allowing them to form their own independent opinions in peace.

What then is this 'independent formation of opinions'? Do we not in any case assimilate our ideas 'from outside', gradually learning from what we see and hear around us? This is undoubtedly the case; man is inextricably bound to his environment, and this holds true for his intellectual processes as well. But let us note that this does not mean that man is nothing more than a learning machine, whose mental processes contain exclusively what has been put into them and nothing more. The latest psychological research emphasizes precisely the originality, spontaneity, and active nature of man's thinking; the way in which language is acquired by the child, for example, has been shown probably to be more an act of *creative mental activity* than one of passive memorization. Man seems to be built in such a way that he has a powerful tendency toward this kind of 'autonomous thinking', 'mental play', 'idea development', etc. Although the point of departure for mental activity thus comes from outside the individual, he is still to a certain extent free to think independently — i.e. to form his own opinions.

But opinions cannot be formed out of nothing, no matter how independent the individual's thinking. What is needed is *information* concerning the issue in question; the final result naturally depends to a crucial extent on the material for thinking which is available. Here we come to the core of the manner in which public opinion is manipulated; the *prevailing climate of opinion* blocks the path of information before it reaches people's minds — it forms, as it were, a protective wall around the individual which repels new information.

The climate of thought protects old attitudes and already assimilated opinions against new information and against the revision of opinions. The climate of opinion does not favour an unbiased mind and thoroughgoing factual information, but rather superficial gestures, worn-out clichés and rumors moving on the wind. In functioning as a protective wall and supporting the individual's prejudices, the climate of opinion fills him with a sense of security, an illusory certainty, which is threatened by everything new and unpredictable.

The individual who breathes the air saturated by the prevailing climate of opinion usually has extremely scanty informational resources for the formation of an independent opinion; he has no range of choice. What is available is chiefly one kind of raw material for autonomous thinking: the opinions previously adopted by others, and the information which supports these opinions. This is particularly the case with those people who live in remote areas or who because of lack of means are not likely to procure for themselves many-sided information or experience. Such an individual is to a great extent at the mercy of the prevailing climate of opinion and is easily manipulated by it.

This conclusion is frequently rebutted by the claim that it means belittlement of people's ability of judgement. This of course is not the case; the 'people's judgement' is on the contrary emphasized here by pointing to the originality of man's thinking. The basic issue is that of the *prerequisites* or raw material which is made available for the general public — in other words, the informational point of departure. It is hypocritical to dismiss the question of manipulation of people's opinions by a simple reference to the 'people's power of discrimination', unless it can be shown that the people have an opportunity to use this power.

What we have found concerning the foundations of opinion formation among the population indicates incontrovertibly that it is only a privileged minority which has the opportunity to utilize its power of judgement

to the full extent. This is the case not only in Finland but in all so-called industrialized and civilized nations. It is simply untrue to claim that we live in an enlightened democracy, in which the citizens form their opinions freely on the basis of many-sided information. A more realistic, perhaps slightly exaggerated picture is that of a society in which the manipulated majority thinks in the way desired by a powerful minority.

So far we have spoken of the climate of opinion as though it were a kind of pollution of the air, amidst which people live without particularly noticing it. But where does this pollution come from — what is the source of the climate of opinion? The individual man or woman is reached by the climate of opinion through other people and through the mass media; he hears what 'people talk about', he reads what 'the papers say', and he follows what 'they say on the radio and TV'. This stream of ideas which reaches the individual, however, has not arisen out of nothingness; 'people's talk' does not originate in their minds, and what is said or written in the mass media comes from some other source than the editorial or production offices of the media themselves.

What, then, is this real source behind all the talk? One of these sources at least, is clear: the school and childrearing principles. During his first twenty years, the individual has undergone a very thorough *process of socialization* at home, in the school and in his peer-group, and the way in which this has taken place will decisively affect his future thinking — what he says to others or writes in the paper. The educational system which underlies the climate of opinion further includes the church and organizational activity, from temperance societies to political associations. In brief, the climate of opinion reflects those permanent institutions which

are most prominent in the society.

Of the institutions in our society, the most stable is naturally our *system of social organization itself.* In the final analysis, in fact, we can say that the climate of opinion is based on the social and economic system; it is a protective wall erected around the members of society by the prevailing social order. This is the case at least in our own society, in which the institutions controlling society are usually outside political democracy. Although our society calls itself a democracy, its citizens are not equal; their attitudes toward each other are based to a great extent on the advantage which they can derive from each other.

The real roots of the climate of opinion thus run very deep. It is therefore wrong to exaggerate the part played by the press, radio and television in creating climate. In general, the mass media do not create the individual's values and attitudes; these are determined, as part of the climate of opinion prevailing in the society, in the course of everyday life, particularly in the process of earning a living, in school and at work, by the rewards and punishments encountered by the individual.

On the other hand, it is also wrong to belittle the significance of the media; while they usually are not the original *source* of the climate of opinion, they play an important role as *shapers* of the prevailing climate of opinion at any given moment. The press and the electronic media are an inseparable part of the climate of opinion, and they also have a crucial effect on the tone and emphasis of the climate of opinion at any given time.

The mass media as shapers of the climate of opinion

A good example of the way in which the mass media consistently help to manipulate public opinion is offered

by a study on the treatment in the British press and television of a demonstration in London against the Vietnam war in October 1968.[2] The press ran articles about the demonstration for weeks preceding the actual event, giving the greatest prominence to the theme of the violence to be expected. This point of view continued to dominate the accounts of the actual demonstration, although, with the exception of one or two incidents, the march of 60, 000 people took place exceptionally peacefully and well under control. The press had created for itself a preconceived idea of the situation, and although this view turned out to be false, it was not given up; instead hopeless efforts were made to derive at least a little violence from the demonstration. Television reports followed the line created by the press, and thus contributed their share to the false image created among the public.

In conclusion, the researchers find that the press and television in England created a 'non-event' — an image of a violent demonstration, which actually never took place. The only exception among all the media was the Communist paper, the *Morning Star*, which approached events more truthfully; it also gave some space to the organizers of the demonstration, something which was neglected by the rest of the press and television.

This treatment of one noteworthy news event by the English media — and many similar instances — suggest that it is misleading to talk about the pluralism and truthfulness of the press in western countries. The message of the mass media is largely biased in favour of prevailing ways of thinking, on the side of previously

2 Halloran—Elliott—Murdock: *Demonstrations and Communication* (London, 1970).

assimilated opinions and attitudes against new information and open-mindedness.

The demonstration coverage described above indicates some of the possibilities available to news transmission for the manipulation of the climate of opinion; an event is placed in a certain light, even though its details as such may be reported accurately. In this case, as in others, we see clearly how the media *indirectly control* the climate of opinion and determine the *terms of debate:* both what is or is not talked about and the way in which it is talked about.

It should be noted here that in the long run indirect control is often more effective than direct interference. Recent media research has in fact begun to emphasize the influence of the press, radio and television on the audience; not the momentary effect of individual articles or programmes but the influence on opinion formation of a steady and prolonged stream of information. Writers in the field have begun to talk about *indoctrination*, about the gradual manipulation of ways of thinking. At the same time, increased attention is being paid to the question of who determines the content of the newspaper or broadcast in the offices where these are prepared. *Power relations in communication* are the new subject of discussion.

What would then be the situation if we had as many left-wing newspapers as the representation of the left in parliament would warrant — if all our mass media, the press, radio and television accurately reflected the opinions found among the members of the society? This would certainly be closer to a healthy pluralism; manipulation of the individual through the medium of climate of opinion would be reduced, and the possibilities of independent opinion formation increased.

But let us note that to mirror the opinions found in

society, no matter how impartially this is done, is not the only function which may be assumed by the mass media. They may take on the task of transmitting not only already existing opinions, but *new information to serve as the foundation for continuous opinion formation*, as well. In other words, the media may take up a position in opposition to the prevailing climate of opinion, by constantly introducing new raw material and thus supporting changes in ways of thinking rather than their conservation. A press which concentrated on the transmission of new information would in a way be biased in favour of change, in the way that a press which concentrates on mirroring the prevailing climate of opinion is biased in favour of the status quo.

The function of the western mass media is traditionally defined as both the reflection of prevailing opinions and the transmission of new information, with the latter — the transmission of news — usually given priority. It now seems, however, that in practice the mirroring of opinions — more specifically, the transmission of opinions pleasing to those in power — has come to occupy first place, often without conscious realization by the practitioners. This is the conclusion which has been arrived at after an analysis of the way in which the press, radio and television treat news material in a certain light, and in general after examining the world view offered by the mass media from the point of view of indoctrination.

Would it not be right to change this order of importance and to lay greater practical stress on the significance of new information? There would then be room for hope that public opinion might some day come to be truly a body of ideas independently arrived at by the members of society, rather than, as today, a spectre manipulated by the climate of opinion.

7. News transmission: past and present

by Pekka Peltola

The key concept in an analysis of the nature of news is that of *news value*. News work basically involves the process of selection from the abundant raw material available. It is therefore necessary to attempt to define the criteria by which selection takes place.

These criteria have never been very closely analysed either by news practitioners or media researchers, both of whom have relied chiefly on the 'eye for news', the 'news instinct', or the 'rule of thumb' developed by the journalistic tradition, which determines the order of importance and manner of presentation of news items chiefly on the basis of unwritten rules. Deviation from these rules has been held to be a manifestation of poor journalism, while their rapid application has been the sign of the professional.

Now, however, it is becoming apparent everywhere that the old practice is no longer sufficient to guide present-day news activity. The improvement of national and international communications together with the acceleration of technological, economic and social development have placed the mass media in a new situation, in which their function and working criteria must be re-evaluated. This is particularly so in the case of television which at birth took over the traditions shaped by the press and radio, but which has turned out to be in many respects more effective than its predecessors.

Newsmen are now asking more and more often, what to tell and how to tell it. These problems are especially acute in publicly controlled broadcasting, where atten-

tion must be devoted to providing a balanced service to all social groups. Speed and an instinctive 'eye for the news' are no longer enough; what is needed is an *analytic approach* to news activity, based on broad information and rational decisions, along with increasing technical skill.

Although the traditional news criteria do not exist in written form, we can discover their character by examining the way in which they work in practice. To understand their background, however, it is necessary to recall the conditions under which news diffusion had its origin: the history of news activity.

A historical survey of news criteria and their development

The transmission of news intended for a broad audience had its origin in the needs of those social classes which had gained wealth by means of commerce, toward the end of the Middle Ages. These needs wers both economic and political. Before trade could be carried on profitably, information was needed concerning ware, shipping traffic, stock-markets, government measures, etc. The merchant who received such information first had an advantage over his competitors, and the information was therefore worth paying well for. Furthermore, the increasing numbers of the bourgeoisie, and their increasing wealth, brought forth the demand for a corresponding degree of political power, and this required information about the state of affairs both at home and abroad, together with a united stand on the part of the bourgeoisie against the governing aristocracy.

Journalistic enterprises which exploited this new demand and purchasing power, as regards both news and opinion, sprang up in western Europe in the 17th century, and it was obvious that these publications

would select their news material with an eye to the needs of the bourgeoisie.

Information about matters of state was the exclusive privilege of the governing aristocracy, of feudal origin. Although this class itself was glad to buy and read printed newssheets, it quickly perceived the danger involved in news transmission as far as its own power was concerned and began to obstruct the development of journalism. As the holder of power, it was able to enact restrictive taxes (e.g. the Stamp Tax) and laws of censorship (seditious libel laws, the Six Acts of 1819), to put pressure on the press or outrightly to bribe it. These measures were intended to prevent the spreading of newspapers into ever broader sections of the nation, and to influence their content; aims which from time to time also succeeded.

The general trend, however, could not be arrested. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the middle classes and the bourgeoisie increased constantly in size and wealth. The existence of a growing readership with purchasing power led to the development of more rapid printing techniques and more effective organisation of news acquisition. Literacy spread, irresistibly broadening the potential audience for news.

By the 19th century, news transmission was already an industry. When the political power of the bourgeoisie began to surpass that of the aristocracy, it meant a tremendous increase in the power of the press serving the middle classes. The laws restricting journalistic activity were repealed and the way was open for a new phase of development. In the United States, this took place soon after independence, in western Europe slightly later.

The demand of the middle class no longer sufficed for growing journalistic enterprises; there was an in-

creasing need to extend the market for journalism among skilled craftsmen and other parts of the wider public. Many older newspapers were unable to change gear and regenerate themselves to suit the needs of these new groups, but new papers were launched for this purpose. The price of these papers also dropped so as to be more accessible to the poorer, and the content was adapted to correspond to the interests of a wider audience.

This, however, did not mean that a press which had expanded its circulation beyond the middle class alone ceased to represent the interests of economic life and of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, now that the centre of power had shifted from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie (the latter of which definitely included newspaper publishers), the press had the most reason to support this group and to seek out a line in its news and other material which both made possible the gaining of new, less well-to-do purchasing groups and reinforced the power of the bourgeoisie.

At the same time, capitalist competition among different newspapers became the order of the day. The competition for readers, and for the advertising that a larger circulation brought, forced the papers into tremendous efforts to increase demand. Newspapers became business enterprises of truly large proportions. Investments in printing technology and in the development of communication media rapidly brought results. The spread of literacy and the growth of population groups taking part in political activity simultaneously meant an increase in the number of people seeking information.

The so-called yellow press dates from the beginning of the 20th century. The competition for readers forced the press to produce papers for the actual working

class, which formed the majority of the population, but whose educational level was still very low. On the other hand, the working class already represented at that time a threat to the power of the bourgeoisie, a threat which had to be taken seriously. It was thus in the interest of the newspaper proprietor to create a newspaper which interested the working class, but which at the same time avoided satisfying the workers' hunger for knowledge; it also had to oppose their political aims and in particular the new view of the world which had spread among them, that of socialism.

The line which was found to satisfy these conditions and produce a profit was one which offered a diet of murder, sport, chauvinism, entertainment and daydreams. Sensations built up out of topics guaranteed meaningless from the point of view of the working class filled the pages of afternoon papers with circulations of millions. It must be noted, of course, that such sensational stories were not invented by the yellow press; their sales value had been already perceived in the early stages of journalistic history, and had accordingly been widely used.

This type of news transmission, of course, could not satisfy the bourgeoisie's own needs for information; for that purpose, a group of quality newspapers was maintained, with a smaller circulation, with fulfilled the essential task of transmitting the most important political and economic news, and provided solemn forums for the opinions of the middle classes.

It follows from this division of labour that the sensational press, with its mass circulation, was unable to gain the influence within the middle classes which its circulation would lead us to expect. Politically speaking, the yellow press was important to the wielders of power only as a means of neutralizing the competing part of the population by attracting the reader's attention

to the non-essential; at the same time, this freed the élite press, even at the price of unpopularity, to present serious alternatives for the preservation and reinforcement of political power.

The present situation is based, in its main outlines, on that prevailing at the turn of the century, which also gave rise to our criteria of what news is and how it should be presented to the public.

The overwhelmingly most important criterion for mass circulation papers is the number of readers. This is integrally related to the demands of economic life. Business is extremely important both as a source of advertising and as the recipient of important news. If business is dissatisfied with a paper so that it does not gain a large circulation, the *raison d'être* of its existence will not be fulfilled, i.e. it will not produce a profit for its owner.

The rationalization of news acquisition made a big step forward in the area of foreign news, when in the early part of the century a number of newspapers came to a mutual agreement. Foreign news, as we know, is the most expensive to obtain, while at the same time its sales value compared to domestic news is usually lower. It was relatively easy to create a realistic basis for the powerful growth of several large news agencies, which arose as business enterprises to satisfy the demand of the press.

When radio and television came into the picture — the former in the 1920's and the latter in the 1940's — their starting point for news transmission was where the press had left off. Basic principles remained the same, especially since the first efforts in the field were again made by commercial enterprises dependent on advertising and circulation. The newspapers at first took a rather unfavourable attitude to the new and powerful

competitor in the advertising market; thus in the United States the press-owned news agencies at first refused to sell their services to radio broadcasting companies. Later, however, a common understanding was reached.

The beginning of publicly-owned radio and TV companies added a new dimension to the picture. No matter how dependent the decision-makers were on business, they nevertheless also had other interests to look after: for instance, they needed reliable information about questions important to the government and administration of the country, such as the preliminary discussion of laws, the working of parliament, the opinions and intentions of various pressure groups, or political events abroad. These questions had always been discussed in the quality press, but now it became necessary to serve the influential group of decision-makers in the entire society, not only those active in the spheres of economic or cultural life. Such were, for instance, trade union leaders, central farming organisations and their active members.

The various interest groups, especially the labour movement, of course had their own newspapers. As these groups, with their newly gained political influence, grew in size, the circulation of their papers also increased. Especially in working class papers, the news criteria applied deviated greatly from those of commercial journalism. The labour movement used its press to propagate its own political principles. However, the labour-movement's view of the news had practically no effect on that of either the commercial press or of the radio and TV companies.

Before the rise of the labour press, papers published by individuals, national educators and by organisations for national culture, especially in northern Europe, had gained some influence over the commercial press and

over the programme policy of the broadcasting companies. This effect was, however, seen most clearly not in news activity, but in other areas. The effect on news criteria is most clearly reflected in the increased reporting of cultural events and festivals.

In radio broadcasting, the expansion of the service to encompass the needs of interest-group leadership meant increased attention in news reporting to the cultural activities of the élite: theatre, opera, serious music, etc. The opinions of interest group leaders and in general information about various matters close to the life of better educated individuals became of interest. In parliamentary democracies, the concept of neutrality in broadcasting was brought up at this time, denoting a political ideology of programme planning aimed at a balance between the internal differences of the bourgeoisie.

In those countries in which the government was not dependent on public elections, the publicly owned information media were unscrupulously used for propaganda purposes. In countries where voting was important to the future of the government, the general public also had to be considered in the diffusion of information. In general, however, only such information was given over the radio as reinforced the position of the bourgeoisie, within which transfers of power actually took place. This led above all to a high status for the government information service, and in general to an attempt to keep the public happy.

Programme-making policy as a whole was stamped on the one hand by a kind of high-status 'éliteness' concerning news programmes, political programmes, serious music and many broadcast talks, and on the other hand by a popular entertainment emphasis in lighter programmes. These entertainment programmes,

which were designed not to offend anyone, were meant to maintain satisfaction with the *status quo* among the public. News and political programmes, on the other hand, remained remote from the general public; strict limitations were set on their form, and they were open primarily to decision-markers.

As democracy began to increase, especially after the Second World War, the wishes of more of the population began to receive more attention in programmes. One group after another became important enough politically for its problems to be given space. Instead of impartiality, the catchword became 'balance', a concept which included attention to ways of thinking primarily predominant outside the group of decision-makers.

A survey of the history of news diffusion indicates that the news judgements of traditional journalism are based, on one hand, on commercial factors — the courting of public favour — and, on the other, on deference to the conditions defined by the power holders. This tradition measures success by audience size and the confidence felt in the news by the political élite.

The unwritten 'journalistic ethics' resulting from these two main factors has at its best nevertheless produced news reports unpalatable either to commercial or political leaders. The principles of these ethics include strict adherence to facts, an attempt to bring out concrete social grievances which concern the reader, and a speed which serves to evade the censor. A journalist presenting sensitive facts has been able to act with the support of the audience and to lean on the income and prestige provided by a large public. An editor who applied these journalistic ethics in their pure form, however, soon got into difficulties if his report dug too deep; public popularity was then no longer able to save him

from the pressure exerted if his reports, for one reason or another, were not to the public taste.

Demonstrations are in general a theoretically interesting news subject, in the handling of which the criteria discussed above appear with special emphasis. A demonstration is specifically a phenomenon originating outside the power centre and it often particularly reflects the demand of a new influence group to make itself heard and obtain political power.

In general, the interests of the political decision-makers have been taken into consideration in two ways. First of all, they have had the use of 'official' information channels, by means of which they can reach the general public. Secondly, they have been offered news in which they themselves are interested. It is obvious that the news information transmitted by radio and television has specifically favoured the uppermost social strata. This has been achieved, on the one hand, by selecting items of news significant to the decision-makers, but only rarely to the general public. Such 'official news' is represented by many government announcements.

Furthermore, the élite group has been unintentionally favoured by presenting even news of general interest in concise and abstract language, so that wide general knowledge has been necessary to understand it ('official news', for instance is of this nature). The man in the street has had to content himself with 'human interest' stories, which have not been of much practical use to him.

The traditional news criteria are unconsciously learned and internalized in the process of practical editing work. This learning occurs on the basis of innumerable hints received from the working environment: the preconceived ideas of colleagues, telephone calls, letters from the public, criticism from influential and respected

individuals, etc. Open pressure from pressure groups has seldom been needed; the criteria have evolved gradually and unobserved, and continue to do so as new social forces continue to emerge with new political significance.

The problem of objectivity

When viewed against a historical background, the demand for 'objective news practice' is seen in a somewhat different light than is usually the case. Reality is full of events; the few events which are selected daily for inclusion in the news represent only a infinitesimal part of everything which has happened that day. The question which remains is that of which events are selected, which are considered important. It is quite obvious that if our most important criterion is that of high sales value combined with a desire to get along with the wielders of power, it is vain to expect the result to reflect the world objectively, even if the events reported are in themselves accurate.

Furthermore, a given item of news can give only an approximation of the fragment of reality which it represents. The details of reality are always seen from only one or two points of view, which are determined by the individual's earlier stereotypes of the world and of the matter in question.

When we further take into account the various editorial stages through which the event selected goes before it finally reaches the audience, the illusion of objectivity becomes more and more obvious. The editor's selection is made partly on the basis of the criteria which he has learned, partly on that of his personal views; the latter are particularly often applied in borderline cases. When the news item is written up, a small

part of the content is gathered from several reports. The most important matters are expressed; their importance is defined by the writer. When the matters for inclusion have been decided on, the question of terminology arises: 'Vietcong' or 'FNL'; 'demonstrators' or 'rioters'; 'the police were forced to fall back on firearms' or 'the police used firearms'. The decision is frequently based on the writer's world-view, his political ideology.

The possible objectivity of news sources is greatly restricted in the case of foreign news by the small number of news agencies and their concentration in the large capitalist states. Of the foreign news material used by YLE, for example, some 95 % is obtained from AP, Reuter's, or AFP; and a great majority of the news deals with events in the industrialized West. The angle from which we see the world is almost exclusively that of a capitalist and industrial nation, even though two thirds of mankind live outside this part of the world and will evidently also begin to influence world happenings in a crucial way in the near future. It is difficult for us to obtain continuous information as to what a majority of mankind really thinks.

The problem of comprehension

The criteria applied to the selection and formulation of the news naturally affect the attitude of the audience. The writer contends that Finnish research has shown that the treatment accorded the news does not correspond to the needs of a great majority of the public.

It has been shown that news broadcasts are among the most popular programmes on the basis of both *audience size* and *appreciation*. Over 80 % of the Finnish population over 15 follow at least one news broadcast a

day over radio or television. The news is also followed with concentration. Around 90 % of listeners and viewers concentrate on the most important news broadcasts.

70 % rate radio and television news as the most *reliable*, compared to other news media. About 80 % of the adult population is satisfied with YLE's news programmes. The figure is about 90 % for domestic news and 70 % for foreign news.

When we start to measure comprehension of the news, however, the situation is different. Interviews carried out immediately after the news have shown that in general little if anything is *remembered* of the *content* of the news. It also appears that the unsystematic details which are retained are subsequently formed into a whole which may be faulty. Even with some help from the interviewer, 48 % of television news viewers remembered nothing of the content of the news. The questions were easy ones: e.g. 'Who are fighting in the Middle East?' (38 % knew the answer, most of them probably already before). The study, in fact, concluded that the main thing retained from the news is that 'nothing special has happened'.

This telephone interview study is also supported by other interviews carried out by YLE researchers. The concluding estimate in these is that news concerning general issues (which forms the basis of news material) offers essential information to only about 10—15 % of the audience.

This is in agreement with the observation that for many Finns, following the news is a mere *ritual*, a way of dividing up the daily rhythm, and a manifestation of alienation. According to one report, "Many people follow the news because in this way they gain a point of contact with the outside world — a fixed point in

life — while the content of the news is indifferent to them".

Accordingly, despite widespread interest in the news and close attention to news events among the public, it is frequently questionable whether the content of the news has been understood. This is so especially in the case of the public at large, which usually lacks the informational background necessary to a comprehension of the abstract concepts involved in the news. In such a situation, news programmes do not fulfil their function, which is the transmission of information; they begin to serve a completely different purpose, whereby the following of news broadcasts becomes a ritual, a custom serving to maintain a sense of security.

Large audiences and interest or confidence in the news thus do not necessarily testify to successful news activity. The final criterion must be comprehension, i.e. the question whether news programmes enable the audience to form a truthful picture of the events described. It should especially be noted that for radio and television — mass media with an exceptionally wide distribution — comprehension should be examined in all social groups, rather than, for example, only from the point of view of the élite. Only a stream of information which penetrates the entire society can serve to advance the democratization which has been set as one of the basic goals of the broadcasting of YLE.

Research has picked out four main factors as important for comprehension of the news message: interest (in so far as it affects the decision to follow the news), concreteness, identification and linguistic factors (including the use of language and the TV picture).

But although taking these factors into consideration is of great help, even most skilful application will not solve all problems. There will still be important issues, news about which does not reach a majority of the

people. Here we come to the effects of *alienation*. Several Finnish researchers have independently come to the conclusion that alienation is an important obstacle to comprehension of the news message. For instance, Pertti Tiihonen:

> We observe that those who use television as their main news medium are passive individuals with little education, who lack motivational stimulation. The expansion of televised news broadcasts so as to include more interpretative commentary material would thus reach primarily passive viewers. It would therefore seem to make sense to plan possible new broadcasts in such a way as to arouse even the most passive viewer.

This would probably be a good step, but this alone is not enough. According to this writer's own study, alienation is largely due to a real lack, for many people, of ways of affecting the social reality around them. This is due in turn to lack of education, low economic status, perhaps also distance from centres of population, and the practical inadequacies of democracy. People have learned that voting alone is not enough to provide political influence, and they lack the experience, audacity and information to try anything else. Furthermore, the channels of influence in remote areas are few and narrow. The causes of alienation will not disappear until our society is considerably more democratic than it is at present.

The problem of comprehension, in news as in other transmissions, has often been seen as a purely linguistic one. According to this point of view, comprehension can be ensured by using easily understood and graphic language. This way of thinking, however, oversimplifies and trivializes the comprehension problem, since it pays no attention to the quality and degree of difficulty of the message as an 'idea whole'. It must be remembered

that the simplicity of an idea — for istance of a news item — is not the same thing as the simplicity of the language in which it is described. Language usage must of course receive continual attention in news transmission, but this in itself is not enough; other means are also necessary to ensure comprehension of the message and simultaneously realization of the purpose of news transmission.

Conclusions

The points of view presented above emphasize the dependence of news activity on social development and on changes in the power structure of society. It is self-evident that the content of the news cannot be unrelated to the interests of the owner of the news medium. In the same way, the interests of the medium owner cannot deviate very far from those of the social class in power in society.

From the mid-19th century on, newspaper publishers thought the press was free, because the aristocracy, which had held power, was forced to abdicate it, while the class from which the publishers came gained power correspondingly. This is the basis of the freedom of the press as it is defined today in western capitalist countries.

In the same way, the press representing the interests of the working class and other groups deprived of power is unable to view the present situation as free; it is a situation in which a successful mass medium can be maintained only by means of large amounts of money and the support of advertisers. For these groups and the press which represents them, freedom of the press and significant news mean something quite different from what they mean to the great majority of the present press.

8. A theoretical commentary

by Yrjö Ahmavaara

The 'informational mass communication' hardly was a unified theory. It was rather a group of people, who — for varying reasons — worked together, and made their best to break a little the traditional bourgeois hegemony in Finnish broadcasting. Still I think that there is a rational nucleus in the 'informational mass communication', which can be expressed in terms of Marxist social theory.

When doing so we must first reject those elements of bourgeois liberalism which are visible even in some articles in this book. We must reject, first of all, the pluralism of values, based on the positivistic conception, according to which ethical and social values are merely subjective, personal opinions. Such a conception fails to see that some values are right, while some are wrong, from the point of view of social progress. The most significant ethical and social values are reflections of the ideology of some *social class*. The values of the progressive class reflect, in each historical epoch, correctly the requirements of social progress, while the values of the reactionary class do not.

Secondly, we must start from the notion of *dialectical contradiction* as the moving force of social progress. According to Marxist theory, social development can be seen as a process, where the moving forces are the dialectical contradictions developing within the social system — and within the larger system of which the social system under consideration is a part (i.e. the other social systems surrounding it, and nature). When say-

ing this we are speaking, in the language of dialectical materialism, of *objective social dialectics*, i.e. of the developmental process proceeding in the objective social reality.

The processes of objective social reality are reflected in the consciousness of human beings, thus forming the subjective process of *social cognition*. The rational nucleus of 'informational mass communication' — as I see it — can now be expressed as follows. The people should get through mass communication as quickly, as exactly, and as concretely as possible maximal information on the dialectical contradictions developing in the objective social reality. By 'mass communication' is here meant all communication directed to large masses.

The subjective factors of social development

The rational nucleus of 'informational mass communication', as formulated above, is nothing but a formulation of the significance of the *subjective factors* of social development. The general principle has different applications in different kinds of societies. The most important distinction is of course the distinction between the societies, where antagonistic contradictions exist, on the one hand, and the societies, where only non-antagonistic contradictions exist, on the other.

In a *class society*, where two antagonistic classes exist, the most important information to be transmitted to the people is information on the fundamental antagonism determining the main direction of social development in the society. In a capitalist society this means, first of all, information on the antagonism between capital and labour, which governs social development towards a social revolution. This is nothing but the admission of the existence of the subjective

conditions of revolution: not only the antagonism appearing in the objective social reality but also its cognition must be advanced enough to yield a revolutionary situation.

In a *classless society*, where no antagonistic classes exist, all the dialectical contradictions carrying out social progress are non-antagonistic by nature. Nevertheless, the optimal social development is still determined by the interaction of the objective and subjective factors, the latter being now related with the correct cognition of the non-antagonistic contradictions developing in the objective social reality. Maximal information on the non-antagonistic contradictions is now a necessary condition of optimal social development.

To sum up, I have so far suggested that

1. Social development is determined by the interaction of both the subjective and objective factors, that
2. The moving forces of social development are the dialectical contradictions developing in the objective social reality, and that
3. The optimal social development requires that maximal information on the dialectical contradictions in the objective social reality is most quickly, exactly, and concretely transmitted by mass communication (by mass communication we mean all kinds of channels transmitting information to great masses).

This is what I have called the rational nucleus of 'informational mass communication'.

Social conditions of 'informational mass communication'

Let us stop to think what it means to require maximal information on social issues of a contradictory nature — as required by the above principle of 'informational mass communication'.

According to Marxist social theory, we must distinguish between the antagonistic (class) societies and the non-antagonistic (classless) societies and, in the former case, between pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations.

1. *Class Society in a Pre-Revolutionary Situation.* In a class society, where the existing antagonistic contradiction gives rise to two mutually antagonistic social classes, the ruling class does all it can to suppress the information concerning the social antagonism. It follows that 1) bourgeois hegemony is governing the official institutions of mass communication (radio, television, press), and accordingly 2) maximal social information cannot be transmitted without taking recourse to the unofficial, and even underground channels of mass communication.

On the other hand, the dependence of the public, official institutions of mass communication in the history of class societies has been different at different times and different periods of society. It may vary during the history of the same social formation. Secondly, on the whole the progress of productive forces, when considering the general tendency over all the history of mankind, has contributed to the increase of the relative autonomy of mass communication. Indeed, the dependence of all communication on the power of the ruling class was very great in primitive class societies (in slave societies), but is somewhat relaxed with social progress. In modern, industrial capitalism it is possible to a certain extent to transmit vital information even on the antagonistic social contradiction even through the channels of official mass communication, in spite of the fact that they are dominated by bourgeois hegemony: the working class has a part of the press, and perhaps some voices even in radio and TV.

Here we must take a glance at the mutual relation of the superstructure and the economic base, according to Marxist social theory. It is well known that social development makes the superstructure change so as to be in necessary conformity with the mode of production of the society. The superstructure includes both the political-juridical-educational institutions of the society and the ideological superstructure. The latter is composed of the social consciousness of the people and of the social (non-production) relations between the people, which are necessary for the functioning of the existing mode of production. The mode of production, on the other hand, comprises the productive forces and the economic base (= production relations + distribution relations) of the society. The above principle of necessary conformity thus implies that mass communication and its institutions in society are essentially determined by the existing mode of production, including the economic base of the society.

However, the determination of superstructure by the economic base is not a mechanistic but a dialectical one. In other words, the superstructure is not merely a passive reflection of the mode of production, but a social factor playing an active part in social development. This is made possible by the *relative autonomy* of the superstructure, through which it is capable of influencing the economic base and the total development in the society. In fact the social dialectics between superstructure and economic base is a necessary condition of revolutionary development. Social revolution is possible only if mass communication and its institutions use their relative autonomy to transmit correct information on social issues.

However, under the conditions of social antagonism the realization of 'informational mass communication'

becomes a continuous struggle against the measures assumed by the ruling class to suppress the information concerning this social antagonism. This is very clear in Finland today, for instance, in connection with broadcasting policy, the universities, and even theatres and schools.

2. *Revolutionary Situation.* In a revolutionary situation, where the population is already divided into two mutually opposed social forces struggling against one another, the social situation has realized the maximal social information with respect to the fundametal an tagonistic contradiction. In such a situation the knowledge of the fundamental antagonistic contradiction has been realized in the form in which it immediately concerns every citizen and determines the main social activity of every citizen.

The revolutionary situation can be considered to continue after the revolution until the remnants of the reactionary class have disappeared, or they no more have great influence on social development.

3. *Classless Society.* In a classless society the realization of maximal social information is, for the first time in history, in the interest of all social groups, accordin to theory. This is because the progress of social development should not any more bring the different sections of the population against one another. All the dialectical contradictions developing in such a society are non-antagonistic, according to Marxist theory. Still the (non-antagonistic) dialectical contradictions are the moving forces of social progress, and the optimal social development presupposes maximal information on the (non-antagonistic) dialectical contradictions developing in the objective reality.

Was the Marxist perspective, discussed in this note, ever expressed in the documents and the official or semi-official theory of 'informational mass communication'? No, it was not. After all, we were not Marxists. A broad formal theoretical framework was worked out (in my book 'Informaatio', 1969), on the basis of the theory of semantic information. The formulation of news criteria, for instance, presented in the article on pp. 163 ff of this book, was given on the basis of this general formal frame of reference. That formulation is reprinted here a most as it was. (In Marxist theory, social information should be defined on the basis of the dialectical contradictions existing in the objective social reality, taking into account the hierarchy and mutual connections of these contradictions, and the dominance of the fundamental antagonistic class contradiction between capital and labour. It seems to me that the general theory of semantic information could be used for such a formulation, and thus contribute to the formation of a theory of social information, based on the Marxist social theory.)

Was 'informational mass communication', with or without the Marxist perspective, ever applied to the programmes of the Finnish state monopoly of broadcasting? I would say no: never systematically. On the whole, there was no systematic education of programme makers along the lines of the so called 'informational mass communication'. What came out of the channels of radio or TV was mainly determined by the subjective conceptions of each editor, in so far as it involved something new. The situation was rather anarchistic, as the editors were allowed more freedom, but without

systematic education to use it. In fact, the rather loose speculations based on bourgeois liberalism and contained in the first publication of the new broadcasting policy did not form any basis for systematic education. The more systematic, theoretical concepts began to take shape first about 1968, when the right-wing reaction was already coming.

PART THREE

IN SEARCH OF A BROADCASTING POLICY

The following three essays, while sharing the same philosophical orientation as the previous chapters, provide examples of how the ideas of informational mass communication may be transformed into operational policy formulations applied to radio and television. Repo's essay has the broadest and least pragmatic approach of the three, and it is typical of the original way of thinking and writing at the beginning of the reform period; it is a summary of the first part of the long-range planning report of 1967. Thus it naturally contains formulations which the authors now regard as outdated, but the main policies outlined have by no means lost their validity — in this respect, it is interesting to compare Repo's essay with Ahmavaara's commentary, which has been formulated in an up-to-date way.

Jyränki's chapter is mostly composed of a text written in 1970 for the report of a National Committee for Broadcasting Reform, of which he was secretary. The section on balance in programme policy has been extracted from Jyränki's legal study on the control of broadcasting, published as a book in 1969. The Committee report itself was a manifestation of the spirit of informational mass communication, as were the concrete proposals for new legislation of broadcasting in Finland, including the control of cable TV. However, a year after the recommendations of the Committee were released the legislature had hardly dealt with this matter — another sign of the political constraints on broadcasting.

The third contribution outlining policies for broadcasting contains part of the report on news transmission already referred to in connection with Peltola's previous chapter (p. 46). The present chapter is the outcome of team work with Nordenstreng as chairman, Peltola as secretary, and Ahmavaara as an 'ideologist'; the group also consisted of five news practitioners and another member of the long-range planning group.

9. Tasks and aims of broadcasting in Finland

by Eino S. Repo

Radio and television are the only media in Finnish society which are able to concentrate on serving the interests of the public and of society, without being sidetracked by commercial, party-political or other extraneous purposes. This unique position also involves a great responsibility, which requires the adoption of objectivity as the guiding principle in broadcasting.

This objectivity, however, does not mean that radio and television should be satisfied with passive reflection of the existing society. On the contrary, broadcasting should function as an agent of fermentation; it should assume a vital and active role in society, particularly as a stimulator of discussion. It should aim not at the creation and shaping of opinions, but at offering a wide-ranging supply of information to its audience, for the formation of individual opinion. Its objectives should include interaction with its audience and its society, and at least to the same extent it should raise its glance over the boundaries of society, into other societies, other continents, the whole world.

One of the principal aims of broadcasting is to offer a view of the world based on accurate information and factual material, a view which changes as the world changes and as our information about the world increases, changes or becomes more complete. Let us again emphasize, however, that it is not the task of broadcasting to implant in its audience some particular world view, but rather to offer the blocks for the building of a personal view. Thus broadcasting may contain

views which are different and even diametrically opposed to each other.

Broadcasting must naturally also aim at providing a true and factually based picture of its own society, without by-passing its less attractive aspects. It must provide its audience with information concerning new and unusual matters, thus keeping it informed and enabling it to take a stand on issues along democratic principles. It follows from this that radio and television must always be ready to experiment with new forms of activity and new types of programme, even at the risk of error, since nothing new can be created nor progress made without taking such a chance.

One fact is essential and must constantly be borne in mind: the audience is not a uniform, inarticulate mass. It is composed of a number of bigger or smaller interest groups, and every individual belongs simultaneously to more than one group. The programme range must therefore be as broad as possible, and attention paid to the needs and wishes of small, demanding and exclusive groups as well as to those of the mass audience. The decisive objective of programme policy thus must be not the capture of a maximum audience, but optimal informativeness and high programme quality.

The framework: development trends in society

Social evolution in Finland is apparently tending towards four major changes: increasing regional differences, with the south of the country growing more rapidly than other areas in population, production and income; urbanisation; increasing technology; and rapid growth in the proportion of elderly people.

The considerable variations in population and income level found from one region to another are significant

for broadcasting, which will have to be expanded and supplemented in regions which will have an ever smaller and relatively poorer population. The projected ratio between investment and income will become increasingly unfavourable for broadcasting. Bearing this social burden belongs undoubtedly to YLE, whose task it is specifically to serve the public and society, and whose goals and objectives are not of a commercial nature.

In the long-range planning of programme activity, attention must be paid to the development characterized by urbanisation, the rapidly increasing proportion of white-collar workers, and the rise in the overall educational level of the population. Since working people will continue to form a great majority of the public in the future, this factor will have to influence programme planning to a greater extent than is at present the case.

The number of elderly people is constantly increasing, and must be taken into account by means of a continuous increase in the number of programmes designed for these age groups. The significance of young people as a pressure group affecting broadcasting may also increase.

We can also expect that technology will play an increasingly important role in society, and that the level of knowledge and education will continue to rise. Broadcasting must keep pace with this change and contribute to it, by purposefully developing its range in this sector.

It is already apparent that the five-day week will affect listening and viewing habits and demands. The former listening and viewing peaks occurred on Saturday evening and Sunday; they are now shifting to Friday evening and Saturday afternoon. This tendency must be followed and taken into account in programme planning.

It is possible that in the near future legislation will be enacted to have radio and television serve the needs

of a large number of different interests; thus people in different fields, in different organisations and communities will be able to follow their own programme. Both the transmitting and the receiving end of broadcasting will probably become cheaper, lighter and more mobile. In the future, almost anybody will probably be able to tape radio and television programmes at home, for his own use.

It may be that a public institution such as YLE will be able to serve only part of the needs and wishes of consumers, and that various other specialised broadcasting services will develop alongside those of YLE. By then, television will have had to give up the attempt to serve the broadest possible circles in a short time; this is already happening in radio. Reliable information and research is needed, so that the audience can be divided into groups without serious error. In other words: we must find out the exact destinations of the programmes and the optimal audience, and we must know at what hours people can be reached for various purposes.

In general, YLE must aim in every respect and in every situation to act with awareness and purpose; we must avoid improvisation, fumbling and trusting to 'luck'. It is essential to keep a close track of developments both in the technology of our own field and broadcasting on one hand, and of variations in the habits and reactions of viewers and listeners on the other, as well as the whole process of development in our own and other societies. This objective can best be accomplished by continued and intensified collaboration with social research. The results of this work — more and deeper information about society — must be put to practical use with vigour and free of prejudice, within the framework of a long-range plan.

As has been indicated, YLE plays an important role in the cultural, social and economic life of Finland. It is entirely appropriate that as an institution it does not submit to serve the interests of some individual or group, or function as the tool of a particular political party. On the other hand, it is clear that the activity of YLE, both what it does and what it leaves undone, cannot help affecting social development and the attitudes of individual citizens. The matter can be expressed thus: YLE must not take up a single *ideological* position (although it should allow different ideologies to be seen and heard, and to confront each other), but it cannot shirk taking an *ethical* stand. All that was said above as to the main principle and duty of broadcasting contributes to the development of a *humanistic and democratic system of values*, and thus reflects an ethical commitment.

It must be assumed these values, which form the cornerstones of our society, are also generally supported in it. We may thus conclude that these two values, humanity and democracy, will together serve as signposts for future YLE broadcasting, and will provide the criteria which will determine the attitudes of radio and television toward the community around and the whole world.

In considering the question of the ideal form of broadcasting in Finnish society, we may as well begin with the classical division into information, entertainment and education. The boundaries between these three types are neither clear nor sharp, and they should not be considered mutually exclusive in that if the main emphasis in a programme is on one of them, the other two are completely disregarded. With every programme

type, we must keep in mind that radio and television should function as a vital and active factor in society, deliberately arousing debate. This idea can be developed by applying the central ideas of Bertolt Brecht's theory of the theatre.

According to Brecht, the task of the theatre is always to entertain the audience, no matter how serious its message may be. The same can be said of radio and television: a programme which does not entertain is useless. In Brecht's train of thought there are two kinds of entertainment. The first, he calls 'dramatic theatre'; the modern social scientist would substitute 'passivising entertainment'. The other, Brecht calls 'epic theatre', and we would substitute 'activating entertainment'. The former, according to Brecht, draws the spectator into the events on the stage and exhausts his mental activity; in the other, the spectator remains outside as an observer, and his intellectual activity is stimulated. The former offers the spectator emotions and hypnotises him; the latter forces him to take a stand and draw conclusions, it offers a world view, not chiefly through suggestion but by appealing to facts.

This latter, activating type of entertainment, should be stressed in all types of programme produced and broadcast by YLE. It is obvious that if this view is followed, even 'entertainment' programmes as such will acquire a new trait, which nowadays is often lacking. They will spur one to intellectual activity, and force the individual to think about issues and to take a stand on them.

The need for recreation and entertainment is naturally as justified as any other, and the satisfaction of this need is one of the tasks of broadcasting. Due to their economic resources and wide sphere of influence, radio and television play an important role in the development

of high quality and broadly diffused entertainment which at the same time is inexpensive to the audience. The electronic media are able to offer the public the best and most talented performers and performances, both Finnish and foreign.

There is no need to draw a sharp line between entertainment and cultural programmes. A good cultural programme is at the same time entertainment, in the best sense of the word, and a well-made entertainment programme is also culture. The main purpose of these two closely related programme types is the same: to offer the listener or viewer enriching experiences. Programmes, for example, which take a stand on some social issue may also be extremely enjoyable. Entertainment must not be interpreted as what helps to kill time; programmes of that type do not represent public service.

We have already noted that the aim of broadcasting should be to act as a stimulant; to satisfy the intellectual, artistic and religious needs of the audience as well as its need for entertainment and recreation. But it must also stimulate these needs, and create new ones, with the goal of enriching the life of the viewer or listener. By enhancing his knowledge and skills, the media can help him get along better in life and in society. The aims of broadcasting include alerting the audience to the opportunities of academic and vocational study and to the possibilities of self-development in general. As an active cultural agent the media must also contribute vigorously to increasing the supply of such opportunities.

Educational activity — teaching and learning — by means of the electronic media is everywhere still in the pioneering stage. The problems differ greatly from one society to another, and the methods to be applied in one are not suitable for another. But this type of broad-

casting will very clearly come to play an increasingly important role. In any case, radio and television have the technological and economic resources enabling them to take advantage of the best resources and expertise for the benefit of their audience; and the ability of the media to serve the public in this respect is enhanced by their international contacts, which are already extensive and constantly expanding.

In the world of today and tomorrow, it is vital to increase mutual understanding between the peoples, nations and races of the world. Our world has at the same time expanded and shrunk. The life and fate of every individual is coming to be affected, to an ever increasing degree, by what happens to some other individual in some other part of the globe. The world is becoming a more and more integrated whole, in which every part affects every other part. The immediate environment in which we spend our lives is no longer the whole world for us. It is merely a place from within which we experience the wider world. In this respect, television in particular has revolutionised the life and world view of practically every citizen. The electronic media are bringing, and must bring, the whole world and its people into our homes.

People are bound together by a stronger community of fate than ever before. Here lies an important ethical task for broadcasting: to arouse people to an understanding of this community of fate and of the ties of international solidarity, and to contribute to the development of a humanistic and democratic system of values.

Towards openess and autonomy

It is important to apply these programme policy yardsticks to the general tendencies prevailing at present in

our society. We have already pointed to some of these tendencies for population structure and economics, and to the practical demands which these place on broadcasting. Let us once more briefly look at our modern society, this time chiefly from the point of view social sciences and in the light of programme policy aims.

According to the forecasts of sociologists and social psychologists, we are progressing rapidly toward a society characterized by accumulating development and specialised division of labour. In this society, planning, a systematic social policy and an awareness and rational regulation of social conflicts through negotiations among interest groups will have ever increasing significance. From the individual's point of view, this development and in particular the increasingly differentiated division of labour will mean a general increase in social intercourse. By means of exchange, the individual will gain benefits for himself; in the language of sociology, he will reap social rewards. Neither the exchange nor the rewards are of a merely material nature; they include such things as respect, influence and friendship.

If the basic values of humanism and democracy are accepted as guidelines for broadcasting, the social line of YLE programme policy must likewise be accepted. Without foundering over one-sided aspirations toward the interests of political parties or other interest groups, YLE must lend its support to the present direction of development from a society characterised by economic and social frustration, uncertainty and aggression toward one of equality and efficiency, offering the individual numerous possibilities of self-fulfilment as well as an enjoyable life.

In practical programme work, therefore, factors which lead to an open mind, an awareness of conflicts and

problems, and the free exhange of opinion, must receive the main emphasis. The maximum amount of information from the most varied possible fields must be transmitted flexibly and rapidly. Furthermore, as we have already mentioned, more emphasis should be placed on educational radio and television, both for schools and adult education. All this is profitable from the point of view of the national economy; in addition, an effective supply of information and education is one of the most important factors working toward the elimination of the uncertainty and aggression caused by social frustration.

In the of programme quantity and the relative proportions of different programme types, this kind of programme policy means that informational programmes of discussion or education will be emphasized at the cost of ordinary entertainment, particularly in television but also in radio. It must, however, be borne in mind that educational programmes may and in fact should contain a great deal of entertainment. There is nothing to prevent us from destroying myths, breaking down rigid patterns of behaviour and weeding out deeply rooted prejudices — all forms of activity to which a great deal of attention should be devoted by YLE — by means of this type of entertainment; in fact, this is probably the most effective approach to the task. It is neither necessary nor desirable for a serious programme, or one offering a great deal of factual information, to be dull.

The first prerequisite for the implementation of the programme policy described above is the greatest possible independence of broadcasting activity. By this we do not mean 'freedom of the airwaves'; in a small country, we are in favour of a so-called state monopoly, i.e. of a single institution under the surveillance of society.

The organ of supervision may be, as up to now, an Administrative Council elected by parliament. But the 'monopoly of the airwaves' should be an open monopoly. The objective should be the greatest possible freedom in questions of programme policy and other activity, within the general framework imposed by the organ of control, and the reduction to a minimum of authoritarian control at various levels of the institution. It is also important to aim at having programmes produced by representatives of different ideologies and ways of thinking; within the framework of the accepted programme policy, these producers should have entirely free hands. It is part of such an open monopoly, of course, that the members of society, through their elected representatives — i.e. parliament and the Administrative Council — have full power to remove and replace when necessary the persons responsible for decision-making at the highest level and for the general lines of programme policy.

The independence meant here precludes the greatest possible freedom of action within the general limits assigned by society. This freedom must naturally be a responsible freedom, but this responsibility should manifest itself chiefly in an awareness that the highest democratic organ of control may, at relatively brief intervals, replace the individuals responsible for guiding the institution by new ones if it finds that matters have been badly managed or are going astray. The present organization makes such a form of control possible, since the Director-General and the programme directors are elected for five-year periods.

YLE must thus be as independent of pressure groups as possible, including the government of the country at a given time. Independence of pressure groups naturally does not mean that radio and television should

retreat into an ivory tower and lose contact with current events in society; the opposite view has already been made sufficiently clear. But in a democratic society, an independent institution in charge of broadcasting should have the greatest possible autonomy with regard to the demands both of the public (including organisations) and the authorities. It is obvious and understandable that popular movements, ideological and political organisations, economic associations and corporations — church, sports organisations, political parties, employers associations and trade unions, to mention but a few — frequently have both demands and expectations with regard to radio and television. It is also obvious that the position of YLE is thus a difficult and delicate one.

Too strict an attitude may lead to the danger of losing touch with time and with society; excessive and ill-considered indulgence, on the other hand, will lead to a situation in which YLE promotes the interests of one particular group or individual, at the expence of others which from a democratic viewpoint are just as entitled to this privilege. In either case, broadcasting will have departed from the policy lines delineated above. From a general point of view, it would also be extremely dangerous to adopt the practice of paying the greatest attention in programme policy to the wishes and demands of those interest groups — i.e. the established power élite — which strive most powerfully to affect the decisions of YLE.

10. The legal control of broadcasting

by Antero Jyränki

The objectives of broadcasting

Broadcasting is a typical form of mass communication; by the latter term we mean that messages are publicly transmitted to a group of individuals more or less simultaneously, that this group is not specifically defined and that it is in principle self-selecting. In general, the receivers of mass communication messages are unknown to the senders.

Of the mass media, radio and television have the widest distribution and are the most rapid. The role played by these media in society is therefore of considerable significance.

The objective of broadcasting in Finland is defined as providing the people, through radio and television programmes, with information and other material for the formation of their view of the world. In fulfilling this objective, broadcasting simultaneously reinforces the democratic social and political system, among the basic prerequisites for which is the availability of many-sided information to the members of society.

Information may be made available on the one hand by transmitting already existing information from one generation to the next, on the other hand by continually establishing new information. The informational tradition in society consists of teaching (the transmission of information) and socialization (the transmission of attitudes). These functions are served above all by the family and by various educational institutions. The

function of broadcasting, on the other hand, is primarily the transmission of general culture and information to the members of society. Like the press, broadcasting should provide its audience, through news broadcasts, with information concerning the state of the world around them at any given moment. At the same time, broadcasting should activate people's thinking, stimulate their intellectual interests and expand their intellectual horizons by providing them with new information.

In order that these objectives may be fulfilled, broadcasting should provide people with factual information concerning their society and the rest of the world, as well as opinions found among members of the society. Since the free transmission of information is one of the basic prerequisites of democracy, broadcasting should defend freedom of expression and oppose efforts to obstruct information transmission.

Broadcasts should not be limited to what is positive in society or what the majority believes, but should also be concerned with what deserves criticism and the problems and points of view of minority groups. Broadcasting must not merely passively reflect society; it must actively further society's development. The demand for the transmission of new information arises from this requirement.

The function of this type of informational broadcasting is not to offer its audience rigid norms or ready-made attitudes. Broadcasting programmes must provide information concerning the norms and ideologies prevailing in the society, but the broadcasters themselves must not assume the position of promulgators of norms.

While the principal objective of broadcasting is in fact the transmission of information, programmes must also make an effort to satisfy people's artistic, recreational and entertainment needs. In this way, broadcasting is able to offer high-quality entertainment and recreation to those population groups which otherwise would not be able to obtain them.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the line drawn between a programme which is primarily entertainment and one which provides information is often an artificial one. Information can also be offered in an entertainment programme, and art programmes may offer a considerable contribution to the cultural life of the country.

Current conceptions of balance in programme policy

Since broadcasting is affected by society and affects it in turn, it must take different values and ideologies equally into account. Ideological balance, however, does not mean that in each individual programme all possible points of view concerning the matter in question should be brought out in equal weight.

The conception of balance concerns in particular the ideologies represented by the different political parties. This principle has already received legal expression. According to the law on political parties, an enterprise operating under state authority is required to treat officially registered parties 'with equality and according to similar principles.' This rule also applies to public broadcasting. The demand of ideological balance, however, does not concern only those programmes in which formal representatives of the various parties present their views. Value judgements and social goals are not presented only in official party speeches; on the contrary, this type of statement is contained in almost all programmes — news, plays, films, etc.

In the Broadcasting Regulations approved by the YLE Administrative Council in 1967, the concept of

neutrality in broadcasting was analysed. According to these rules, the purpose of broadcasting is to offer a world view based on true information and facts. The broadcasting company should not aim at implanting a particular world view in its audience, but rather at making available the block necessary to build up one's own view of the world. Different and even mutually contradictory views of the world and of life may and should be presented in programmes, but the formation of these views is not the task of broadcasting but of each member of society individually. The aim of broadcasting should be to provide a realistic picture of Finnish society, without glossing over its negative aspects.

On this basis, the condition of neutrality is interpreted to mean that broadcasting must not be allowed to become the tool of private or group interests, or to strive toward political goals. Neutrality is to be fulfilled by means of balanced selection of programmes and broadcasters. Neutrality means that different opinions and different ideological tendencies are brought out in programmes in the correct balance. The broadcasting organisation itself is not to commit itself to an ideological stand. It should, however, aim at furthering and strengthening fundamental social and human values such as democracy, freedom of speech, human rights, tolerance toward minority groups, an ethical world view and a wholesome way of life.

Although the Broadcasting Regulations speak of a world view based on 'true information and facts', the general impression which it gives rise to is that balance means above all the balanced presentation of different opinions. Information requires interpretation, and every interpretation always contains a particular tendency. The *Bundesverfassungsgericht* of the German Federal Republic made this point with regard to broadcasting in its so-called Television Act of 1961. It stated that broadcasting influences public opinion through all programmes, not merely through news and explicitly political programmes, but also in radio and television plays, films, musical programmes and revues. Every broadcast has a particular tendency. This appears in particular in decisions as to which programmes will not be broadcast, what does not need to interest the viewer or listener, what can be omitted and how the programme to be broadcast is shaped.

The Broadcasting Regulations include a set of special rules concerning political programmes; these include election broadcasts, the appearance of political figures, programmes arranged by the parties and broadcasts from parliament. The term 'political' is here interprented particularly narrowly. It can also be viewed as including much more, if we start with the assumption that politics is concerned with the creation and preservation of a particular social organisation, and with the achievement of general objectives, or objectives important to groups, within the framework of this organisation. In this sense, it is very difficult or even impossible to draw a line between 'political' and 'non-political' or 'neutral' broadcasting. Values and opinions related to social organisation or to goals of general or group importance are expressed in all programmes, and are implicit in the selection — and rejection — of programmes. Some of these values, it is true, are experienced by the programme makers as universal human truths, which are not open to question. The implantation of such basic values in the public — i.e. indoctrination — is then not considered a form of political activity.

Examples of the political nature of superficially 'neutral' programmes are easy to find. Television serials may give a picture of the relations between East and

West in which the former appears in an exclusively negative role and the latter in an exclusively positive one. Entertainment programmes may give the impression that the prevailing social and political conditions are in every way justified, and that there is no cause for criticism. The indoctrination contained in such programmes serves to reinforce the prevailing political and social organisation.

Since attitudes and value judgements form part of all broadcasting, the demand of balanced values must likewise be extended to concern all broadcasting. If, for example, one-sided indoctrination cannot be eliminated from entertainment programmes, the disturbed balance must be restored by presenting opposite views in other types of programmes.

If the demand for balance is included in the legislation on broadcasting, it naturally is binding upon the personnel in charge of broadcasting. This obligation, however, does not provide a clear and unambiguous method of deciding what kind of broadcasting is balanced and what kind is not. A large number of questions remain unresolved: what are the opinions which must be taken into account, does balance mean equal broadcasting time, within what total unit of time should balance be maintained, what is the significance to be assigned to stronger or weaker emphasis, is balance of equal importance in all programme types, etc. It is probably difficult to give an unconditional and correct answer to these questions. What is most important is in fact an awareness of the problems. Furthermore, it should be noted that the strongest trends of thought will come to the foreground of their own accord. It is the task of the broadcasting enterprise to ensure that opinions which are those of a minority or receive only little support are also brought out in broadcasting.

It is, however, interesting to observe that the demand of balance in broadcasting has not been carried to its extreme in any part of the western world. In general, it is admitted that broadcasting may not maintain neutrality on certain basic values. The fundamental problem involved in the demand for balance and neutrality is in fact what these basic values are in our pluralistic society, and more specifically who is to determine what they are. In Finland, the highest administrative body of the broadcasting company has taken the crucial step of itself defining the limit of neutrality. It should be noted, however, that in reality the drawing of this line remains to a very great extent the responsibility of the personnel in charge of programme production.

The question of advertising

The term 'commercial advertising' is used here to denote activity the purpose of which is, for financial or other compensation, to induce the individual to purchase a given commodity or to use the services of a given business enterprise. Advertising of this type takes place in Finland at present in the press (newspapers and periodicals), television programmes, outdoor billboard advertising and direct advertising (in the form, for example, of sales letters distributed to homes).

In business terms, advertising is above all a device of monopolistic competition. By means of advertising, 'brand names' are created for standard products, and a situation of constant competition is established without the need for competition in price. Advertising costs form a permanent increment to the price (in particular of products which are not new in the real sense of the word), and this increment is paid by the consumer. There is so far very little information about the overall

economic consequences of advertising. Its primary affect is probably on the structure of consumption.

According to certain sociological studies, advertising leads to increased uniformity among the members of society. When directed to large groups, at its extreme to the entire population, advertising increases the uniformity of man's psychological environment. A sociologically positive trait of such an effect is increased social integration; a negative consequence is the loss of individual differences and drying up of the sources of original imagination.

According to the same studies, advertising has a distorting effect on the individual's view of reality (his world view). This is due to the way in which advertising messages, in attempting to affect the motives upon which the receiver acts, lay undue emphasis on the norms, values and conditions prevailing in society. Advertising bears only upon marketable commodities, commodities which bring financial profit to the seller. Advertising is not used, for example, to induce members of society to value education, a clean environment or other such social ends.

The objective of broadcasting is to provide the members of society with information and other material for the formation of their own world view. The inclusion of advertising messages in broadcasts does not further this end.

According to information theory, the obtaining of information means a decrease in intellectual uncertainty about the matter in question. An advertisement may perhaps present some true facts regarding the positive qualities of the product advertised, but the information contained in these facts is frequently nil. From the point of view of intellectual uncertainty about the commodity, its negative aspects are generally of equal importance. Our intellectual uncertainty regarding the commodity does not decrease if we discover something about its positive qualities, unless we also know something about its negative ones. In most cases, commercial advertising is a kind of norm proclamation and an exhortation to purchase.

Since radio and television advertisements are expensive, and because of the danger of the falling off of audience attention, such advertisements cannot be very long, and it is thus almost impossible for them to contain any real information concerning the product of service advertised. The aim of broadcast advertising is in fact to arouse sensations in the individual which he experiences as his own, without any real reason.

The effectiveness of advertising is based on the arousal in the individual of positive associations between the product and another emotionally coloured idea. Such an association may be quite mechanical, based merely on the simultaneous presentation of the product and some other image with a positive colouring. In scientific terminology, this kind of association is called conditioning and manipulation. The two interlinked ideas need not be related in any way except for their occurring together in time and place.

Radio and television advertising also has certain particular features which distinguish it from other advertising, and which deserve some attention here. The reader of a newspaper or magazine is able to reject those advertisements which for one reason or another he does not want to accept. It is much more difficult for the television viewer or radio listener to apply the same method of 'skipping over'. This is made even more difficult by the placing of broadcasting advertisements, which is based on the principle of maximum gain, i.e. with a view toward the greatest possible ef-

fectiveness of the advertisement. Thus efforts are made to present advertisements at the time of popular programmes; before them, after them and even in the middle of them.

Finland is one of the few European countries in which single programme units (such as a play or a film) are broken up several times by commercial advertisements. This practice prevents the continuous following of such a programme, and at the same time practically forces the viewer to follow the advertisement. The use of a medium tied to time for advertising purposes, is in fact — unless the commercials are presented under their own programme title as a separate whole — in conflict with the consumer's freedom of choice.

We therefore conclude that if advertising is permitted it is among those programmes which should receive special attention with a view to programme balance. If this is not desired, or if it turns out to be impossible in practice, advertising in broadcasting should be stopped.

References to the generally accepted position of advertising in the press are irrelevant. Freedom of the press in Finland has meant above all the independence of the publisher with regard to the authorities. Freedom of the press has not been interpreted as the right of the public to balanced information within the framework of a single journalistic enterprise, and thus in this area there have been no remarks concerning advertising in terms of freedom of speech.

Organisational alternatives regarding the control of broadcasting

The organisation which serves as the basis for broadcasting legislation must satisfy two important conditions: (1) the objectives of broadcasting, as discussed above,

can be accomplished, and (2) there must be no obstacle to the realisation of freedom of speech, as expressed in § 10 of the Constitution, in broadcasting.

The principal alternatives in the control of broadcasting are based on the way in which broadcasting is financed. In the case of *commercial broadcasting organisation*, broadcasting is financed by funds derived from broadcasting advertising, while in *public organisation*, broadcasting is financed by public funds. These two alternatives, of which there are numerous variations, must be examined from the point of view of the criteria introduced above.

In its purest form, commercial broadcasting means that broadcasting is financed by means of funds obtained from advertisements included in the broadcasts, and that the preparation and acquisition of programme material is in the hands of one or more privately owned business enterprises. Even under such a system, broadcasting is dependent on a license obtained from the state authorities. An example of the purely commercial organisation of broadcasting is the system found in the United States.

There are numerous variations on the basic theme of commercial organisation. In Europe, the system under which a State broadcasting company, operating primarily with State funds, obtains part of its income from commercials, is relatively common (e.g. Italy, Austria, France). Another arrangement, which is relatively rare (found only in Great Britain and Finland) is that in which a commercial enterprise functions alongside the public one, producing not only advertisements but also actual programmes to be broadcast with them. Exclusively commercial broadcasting is found in Luxembourg and Monaco.

The commercial organisation of broadcasting directly affects the kind of programme broadcast. This effect is

at its greatest under purely commercial systems; with other variations, the effect of the system can be reduced by various means as long as the production of programmes is in the hands of the public enterprise.

Under the commercial organisation of broadcasting, programmes are designed in such a way that the advertising they contain will (it is hoped) reach the largest possible audience. Thus the matters with which the programmes are concerned are those which the personnel of the broadcasting enterprise in question assume will interest the audience. The programmes tend to favour matters in which many people are interested, and to avoid those in which only few are interested.

Accordingly, certain types of information are eliminated from broadcasting in the effort to increase advertising income. In trying to tell about matters which will interest the largest possible audience without offending any large group, programme producers must usually restrict themselves to following dominant ways of thinking, avoiding anything which the audience would find strange. In addition, the most important advertisers may influence the content of communication in keeping with their own interests. The commercial organisation of broadcasting is thus able to restrict the way in which broadcasting offers information to its audience.

It has been shown that the offerings supplied by the mass media do not simply follow demand; very often the reverse is true — supply creates demand. The media, with their own offerings, have taught people to ask for what they then say they want. In fitting their messages to the wishes of the majority, the mass media and in particular broadcasting enterprises restrict the possibilities of minority groups of obtaining the programmes they want. This is especially true of a small country

like Finland, in which minority groups are tiny.

In spite of the numerous weaknesses of an organisation based on commercial principles, the press in Finland is organised chiefly in this way; newspapers are business enterprises, receiving a major part (approx. 75 %) of their income from advertising. This organisation is the result of a long process of historical development. There is no reason to repeat the same principles in the organisation of broadcasting, particularly since in the sphere of the electronic media it is difficult if not impossible to have the same variety of simultaneously sent messages as with the printed word.

The public organisation of broadcasting, on the other hand, is at its purest in those countries in which broadcasting is the exclusive right of a single enterprise or institution, and in which the activity of this enterprise or institution is financed exclusively by public funds; examples are Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Soviet Union. Within the framework of public organisation, however, the restriction of broadcasting rights to a single enterprise is not the only possible alternative. Another possibility is a mixed system, in which a public enterprise obtains part of its income through advertising. This is the system found in the German Federal Republic, which includes a number of regional broadcasting enterprises.

If broadcasting is financed by public funds, it is freed from the limitations imposed by commercial interests. On the other hand, broadcasting which is dependent on public money may be so strictly controlled by the authorities that messages are permitted only if they are consistent with the particular social or religious ideology adopted in advance.

The public organisational model, however, does not of necessity have to lead to this type of *confessional*

mass communication. Within this framework, a system may be achieved which enables broadcasting to concentrate on making new information available to the members of society. This will take place only if the enterprise or enterprises are guaranteed independence of the government and are not allowed to fall under the control of a single party.

It is precisely by means of measures aimed at the independence of broadcasting that conflict with the principle of freedom of speech may be avoided. The matter, however, is not that simple. In particular the purest form of public organisation, that of a publicly financed broadcasting enterprise with exclusive rights, has been criticized from a constitutional point of view. Such criticism has been based on the traditional concept of freedom of speech, and on comparisons with the daily and periodical press, which is organised along quite different principles.

The following conclusions may be drawn:

— The commercial basis of organisation is not able to guarantee adequately the fulfillment of the objectives adopted for broadcasting.

— A form of public organisation in which the government or a single political group is able decisively to influence broadcasting is in conflict both with the principle of free speech and with the objectives of broadcasting.

— The only organisational alternative which will guarantee both the realisation of broadcasting objectives and freedom of speech, would seem to be that under which broadcasting is carried on by an enterprise or institution financed chiefly by public funds, which is not controlled by the government or public authorities, and whose control is participated in by various groups in society.

For these reasons, a broadcasting organisation based on the following principles is recommended:

1. The objectives of broadcasting, and the demands to be placed on broadcasting programmes, should be specified by law.

2. Broadcasting should be legally guaranteed complete independence of the government of the country.

3. The administration of broadcasting should be organised so that different social groups, as much as possible, are represented in the highest decision-making body.

4. The financing of broadcasting should take place chiefly through public funds, so that the enterprise carrying on broadcasting is given the fullest possible independence in economic matters also.

5. Insofar as advertising is permitted as a source of income, measures should be taken to ensure that the effect of commercial interests on the content of broadcasting is as small as possible.

6. The reception of broadcast messages is free for all citizens. The holders of radio and TV sets may, however, be charged a separate fee.

One of the main principles adopted above is that different social groups should have an opportunity, through their representatives, of taking part in the design of programmes. In practice, however, such influence can be only indirect, taking place through the highest decision-making body of the broadcasting enterprise. Attention should therefore be paid to ways of ensuring balanced representation of different groups in this organ.

One way is to have detailed regulations as to the groups which should be represented in the highest administrative body included in legislation. Thus the present law concerning the right of the State to transfer state

property acquired for purposes of broadcasting to corporations contains the following specifications:

"The members of the administrative board should include representatives of art, adult education, and business as well as different social and language groups."

It is, however, hardly possible to have a law which would directly ensure the satisfactory representation of different groups. If different social groups are to be represented in the highest decision-making body of the broadcasting corporation, the most effective way of ensuring this is to have these groups, either directly or through their representatives, elect a given number of members to that body.

One alternative is to have the large civic organisations working in the various sectors of education and social life appoint all or a majority of the members of the board. In the German Federal Republic, for example, the administration of broadcasting enterprises in force since 1952 has been organised so that a majority of the members of the highest decision-making bodies are appointed by organisations representing different social groups.

There are, however, some significant drawbacks to such a system. Whenever a legal or administrative decision was made as to what organisations would be allowed to participate in appointing members, the question might justifiably be asked as to why precisely those organisations were given that right, to the exclusion of all others. In practice it would be impossible to arrive at an entirely justified solution.

Another alternative which has been proposed is a system in which all citizens elect the members of the highest decision-making body for the broadcasting enterprise, in direct and proportional elections. One variation on this which has been suggested is that all

holders of radio or television sets be entitled to vote in such an election. This variation, however, is not acceptable, since such an election would not give a true picture of conceptions concerning broadcasting in different social groups. In each household, one working adult is considered to be the holder of the set. This means that young people, women and old people would in many cases lose the opportunity of affecting broadcasting. If the idea of a public election is accepted, it will have to mean a system in which all citizens (e.g. all those entitled to vote in parliamentary elections, all those over 18 years of age) will be entitled to vote.

Even in this form, the idea of a popular election cannot be considered to serve the purpose for which it is designed. The electoral procedure is clumsy and expensive, and demands a great deal of work; it is comparable in every way to a national election. Voting frequency might be low, since the election would touch upon only part of the everyday life of citizens. These drawbacks, however, may be avoided by organising broadcasting elections simultaneously with regular parliamentary elections.

This procedure also involves the assumption that positions regarding the main issues of parliamentary elections will also determine voting behaviour in broadcasting elections. In practice it is hardly likely that separate 'radio parties' would spring up; on the contrary, the grouping would be the same as in the regular elections.

In either case, whether the broadcasting elections are held together with parliamentary elections or separately, the adoption of such a system would place undue emphasis on the decision-making involved in broadcasting, compared to other decisions made in society. Such elections would disperse the interest of the members

of society in issues of real importance from a national point of view.

The best solution is probably that in which parliament continues to elect the highest decision-making organ for the broadcasting organisation. The election would be a proportional one, with suffrage for parliamentary electors. With such a procedure, the decision-making board would reflect a particular division of the citizens, i.e. one by political parties. There are of course also other significant divisions in Finnish society, but these also will be taken into account with the election performed in this manner.

It is probably appropriate for every newly elected parliament to have the opportunity, immediately after the elections, to state its opinion concerning the composition of the highest decision-making body of the broadcasting enterprise. The term of office of the latter body should therefore be tied to that of parliament, and would last until the first session of parliament after the next elections.

11. Informational news criteria

by Yrjö Ahmavaara, Kaarle Nordenstreng and Pekka Peltola

Underlying the ideas and suggestions contained in the news-policy report are two basic principles. The first of these is that news should be approached from two different points of view: (1) that of the actual *news events* and the process of selection involved in the reporting of these events, and (2) that of the news broadcast itself, i.e. the *means* used in transmitting these events to the audience. The first point of view includes the problem of news criteria, the second that of comprehension. The choice of news is naturally the primary question, linked with the goals of news activity as a whole. The manner of presentation is of secondary importance. In practice of course this is often decisive, but we must nevertheless remember that means always merely serve a given end.

The second basic principle has to do with news criteria and objectives: it postulates a distinction between the *objective importance* or significance of a piece of news, and the *subjective interest* felt in the news by the listeners or viewers. According to this way of thinking, the actual news criteria by which news is determined should be based primarily on the significance of an event, rather than on a consideration of the interest aroused among the general public. The means of presenting the news, on the other hand, should be chosen on the basis of what is close to the audience and interesting to it. Only in this way can we ensure comprehension of the news.

Evidently more background commentary and ex-

planation of the current news is necessary, both in news broadcasts and in programme output as a whole, than is the practice today. The purpose of such background material is specifically to link the frequently distant and abstract events reported in the news to the everyday reality of the world of the audience. In any case, the fact that news criteria are based on intrinsic significance rather than on interest prevents news activity from slipping in the direction of sensational journalism based on triviality.

No report can give precise and unambiguous directions which would enable the news editor to make the 'absolutely right' decision. In this case the editor would again turn into an automation, similar to the one shaped by the traditional news criteria. On the contrary, the news editor should be capable of independent thinking and should be aware as far as possible of the problems of his field. The aim of this report is to indicate directions, rather than to come up with binding rules or instructions.

The objectives of news

According to YLE Broadcasting Regulations, the main general objective of broadcasting is

> to offer a view of the world based on correct information and on facts, which changes as the world changes and as our knowledge of it increases, changes or becomes more perfect. YLE should not aim at implanting some particular world view in its audience, but rather at making available the blocks necessary to build up a personal world view.

These general guidelines naturally concern all fields of programme activity, including the news. By a news

item we mean a piece of information about an event which has recently occurred or has recently been brought up, which is of significance to the audience according to the news criteria defined below. News can be divided into two parts: raw news and background commentary. Raw news means the news item as such, without explanation or background. The background commentary goes more deeply into the topics brought up in the raw news. In the case of raw news, recentness generally refers to the span of one day. Background commentary may treat events over a longer time span.

The function of *raw news* is to supply the audience with informational raw material. This type of news generally contains short pieces of information about events and matters existing in the real world. Raw news functions more or less as an extension of our senses; it allows us to perceive things which would otherwise not be reached by our eyes, ears or other senses. Such information is necessary to the individual in his attempt to orient himself in his environment. Just as the information received by our senses in everyday life is not necessarily presented in any particular order, so the stream of information provided by the raw news does not necessarily form a meaningful whole.

For practical reasons it is useful to distinguish between concrete and abstract raw news. *Concrete* raw news does not include any difficult concept of a general nature which would have to be separately explained. *Abstract* news contains either one or more general concepts (e.g. 'family pension'), which the listeners cannot be assumed to understand without a special background commentary. But both concrete and abstract news items refer to some real event or sequence of events which has occurred uniquely at some point in space and in time. (Such an event or sequence of

events can be called a *singular* phenomenon). For example, a concrete news item may describe the fact that at a certain shipyard on a certain day a new vessel was launched, with such and such properties, which was given such and such a name. An abstract news item will be concerned, for instance, with the fact that on a particular day the government submitted a bill in parliament for the reform of family pensions.

The purpose of the *background commentary* is to analyse and organise the raw news material so as to make it readily comprehensible. Thus the commentary will explain the general concepts occurring in the raw news (e.g. family pension), so that their content becomes familiar, and will provide general background information. Commentary does not necessarily mean commitment to a particular point of view or side in an issue. Such commitment implies support for particular norms, which is not the function of background news commentary.

However, the background commentary cannot avoid commitment even in contradictory issues, where truthfulness requires it. This can briefly be called *intellectual activation.* Intellectual activation means arousing the individual to thinking about reality, about the world in which he lives. The aim is to mobilize the individual's thinking, so that he is able to construct his view of the world on the basis of the factual information supplied to him every day; to prevent him from becoming ossified and rigid while the world around him is changing and our knowledge of it increasing. If we call the raw news material 'an extension of the senses', then background commentary can be compared to a switch which 'turns on' mental activity.

The background commentary must provide information which is important from the point of view of the individual's picture of the world, i.e. such information must be relevant to his overall conception of reality. The starting point is what the individual himself considers important, and the aim is to help him link the content of the raw news to his own view of the world. Information which activates the individual intellectually provides evidence of facts which the individual has ignored in his previous beliefs concerning reality, beliefs which are often called prejudices or stereotypes. If the individual receives information about a fact which does not fit in with his preconceived ideas, intellectual activation is possible and the result will probably be a more realistic stereotype. Thus news activity is intellectually activating with regard to the audience as a whole if it provides as much information as possible about such facts as are known to be unfamiliar or ignored among the public.

Weather, police and betting announcements, together with other such *service information* of general usefulness, do not belong to news activity except in so far as they are possible sources of news items (according to the normal news criteria). However, it is often most practical to broadcast such announcements within the framework of a news programme. If the news broadcast allows enough time, there is probably no particular reason to change existing practice. It should be noted, however, that the inclusion of these announcements in news programmes does not yet make news out of them, so that news criteria cannot be applied to them. The results of sports competitions should also be regarded as service information.

The objective of news activity is to to transmit valid information on a current basis, and to initiate the process of intellectual activation related to it. News ma-

terial must be selected and transmitted to the audience according to criteria which enable us to achieve these objectives. By means of these criteria, the value of a given news item can be determined at least with respect to other news, together with manner of transmission which will give the best result within the framework of the news material of a given day.

The criteria applied in news activity with this aim cannot be limited to the transmission of information in harmony with some particular subjective belief. This would be a *confessional* news criterion. Nor can the news be restricted to what the audience wants to hear; the interest of the audience at a given time is determined by what people are accustomed to (or what has been given them before). This would represent a *commercial* news criterion. The primary criterion of news selection should be the extent to which the event described concretely affects the life of a large number of people, i.e. the significance of the event for the audience. In this case, we are applying an *informational* news criterion.

In his analysis, based on semantic information theory, Yrjö Ahmavaara has given a formal logical expression to the general objective of YLE, as expressed in the Broadcasting Regulations.[1] Within this framework information is, by definition, understood as those messages which are likely to make the recipient's world view more realistic, i.e. more consistent with new evidence about objective reality. This often leads to an emphasis on facts and opinions ignored by the climate of public opinion, and furthermore to a kind of

1 The informational news criteria as described here are based on Ahmavaara's study *Informaatio*. (Information: a study in the logic of communication; in Finnish; Tapiola 1969).

fruitful conflict between the medium and the public.

Informational criteria of news value[2]

1. The external criterion

The importance of a news item is determined in the first place by *the extent to which the event described affects the lives of the audience either directly or indirectly, regardless of whether or not the audience is itself aware of this effect.*

Thus the news of negotiations in Peru between the ministers of industry of the four largest copper-producing countries is of considerable value; these four countries are developing countries, which by means of cooperation may be able to free themselves from the tutelage of the industrial nations and achieve a stable economic position. Furthermore, copper is of strategic importance; it is therefore possible that the industrial nations will not willingly give up their advantage, and

2 These are the news criteria as formulated by the news policy report. Since then, informational news criteria have been officially confirmed as the guiding principles for YLE news broadcasts, as formulated in the revised Broadcasting Regulations of 1971:

> News here is understood to mean information concerning some event which has recently taken place or been brought up. Recentness in this context generally means the span of one day. News value is determined on the basis of news criteria.
> The current news is placed in the correct context by means of background commentary. It is the duty of news broadcasting to ensure that new information is transmitted to the audience rapidly and in such a form, together with such

crises will occur of which the true nature will perhaps not be revealed. For all these reasons, the news of the negotiations is important and concerns indirectly the Finnish public (which however cannot be expected to realize the significance of the meeting).

According to this criterion, statistical information which describes in a significant way a process of development (such as pollution, income differences, etc.) may also have news value.

The external criterion should nevertheless not be applied so rigidly that news items providing a general informational background for the audience are eliminated. Such background is continually necessary, both for domestic and international news. In this case such events also have news value which perhaps do not *ad hoc* concern a Finnish audience even indirectly, but which are part of a general trend of development which is useful to understand.

additional information, that it can be easily and accurately understood and utilized.

News criteria are the means whereby the material for news programmes is selected out of the mass of current information available. The news value of an event is determined chiefly according to the following three criteria, together or separately:

— the real intensity of the event
— the range of influence of the event, i.e. the size of the group of people affected
— the extent to which the event concerns the listeners or viewers themselves, or the groups to which they belong.

In the view of the present writers, the above formulation is not entirely successful, since it introduces a criterion (intensity) which is more liable to subjective interpretation than the originally proposed 'external criterion'. The term 'intensity' may easily be used to introduce material into the news with a purely sensational value.

2. The criterion of generality

A news item must have general significance. This means that *it must affect as large a part as possible of the audience which is following the news broadcast.* According to this criterion, news of an event which affects the life of only a few individuals is not particularly valuable. For example, publicizing the names of the people who died when a house burnt down is not appropriate, unless they happened to be especially prominent individuals.

This criterion should also not be applied so rigidly that it excludes the possibility of transmitting information to minority groups which are especially dependent on radio news broadcasts for their information (e.g. the blind).

Supplementary criteria

The selection of raw news should be based on the application of these two criteria. In addition, however, the general requirements applicable to all news — reliability, balance and speed — should also be applied.

Reliability means that individual items of information should be checked whenever possible. In general this can be done with all domestic news. From abroad, however, information is often obtained which is uncertain, in the sense that only the agency supplying the information is responsible for its content. In making such information public the uncertainty involved should always be made clear, not merely by mentioning the initials of the news agency responsible, which are often meaningless to the audience, but in some more explicit manner.

Reliability is closely related to *balance* insofar as it is often difficult to achieve a reliable picture of an event unless many different points of view are taken into account. Over a period of time a number of different interpretations of an event or issue should be presented, as far as they are available. This places great demands on the editors' ability and on their desire to be as objective as possible. However, since no one individual can be completely objective, even if he makes a sincere effort to be so, many different ways of thinking should be represented on the editorial board. Only this can guarantee balance in the long run.

The most important thing is not to strive toward objectivity in the short run, toward a state of affairs in which every single news item is 'the Truth'; this is not possible. If the partiality, onesidedness, subjectivity and unreliability of each item of news are accepted as the starting point, it will be possible to assure impartiality in the long run.

All possible sources of news ought to be used and the editorial offices should be staffed with editors who differ from each other in their subjective evaluations. In this way something essential can be achieved by listening to the other side, similar treatment of parties, verification of information and so on.

Speed is an essential part of news transmission. It is important that news information be broadcast to the audience without delay. This nevertheless does not mean that speed should be used as an excuse for inaccurate reporting, superficial commentary or outright errors. In particular, there is no need for YLE to compete with itself in speed, even if it does compete with other news media.

In the case of *background commentary*, additional criteria must be applied, which we can call internal

criteria. Since the point of departure of the commentary is the raw news, the external and general criteria are taken into consideration indirectly.

The internal news criterion means that the news value of an item is determined by the significance attached to it by the recipient himself. The purpose of the background commentary thus is to explain the content of a news item to the listener in such a way that he comes to perceive its relevance to his own life. This is simultaneously intellectual activation, which is the actual function of the background commentary.

Conclusions

On the basis of the criteria defined above, part of present-day news material should be treated on a different basis: for example crimes, accidents, beauty contests, royal weddings and sports. This kind of news as such rarely has any relevance to the life of the audience or to intellectual activation, unless the events concerned reach significantly high proportions or unless they are treated in such a way as to bring out their general significance or lack of it. These news items are also typical of news selected on the basis of traditional (commercial) news criteria, i.e. giving the public what it wants to hear and what it has been made used to wanting.

The use of this kind of material is usually defended by saying that it also gets people to follow more important news. However, there is equal reason to say that the use of such material attracts the interest of the audience away from more important issues to trivialities. Therefore there is reason to exclude these items from news broadcasts. The possible decrease in audience size caused by the elimination of this kind of 'selling' raw news material can be prevented by increasing the interest

of more important issues through background commentary. Furthermore, audience research has shown that following news broadcasts does not depend exclusively on their contents. We must also remember that the news value of an item can be appreciably affected by the way in which it is treated. Thus for example a report of an accident in which attention is drawn primarily to the general causes of accidents and ways of eliminating them may contribute significantly to prevention of accidents in the future.

PART FOUR

EPILOGUE

The concluding chapter of this collection of essays returns to review the 'Finnish experiment', its theory and practice. Thus we now continue from the point where the introductory chapter ended. What has been presented inbetween should not be viewed as theoretical conceptions without reference to the societal reality in which the ideas were experimented. In Finland informational broadcasting policy and the reaction created by it have inspired an exceptionally vivid public debate encompassing all possible professional, political and philosophical orientations. The intention of this Epilogue is to make some *ex post* observations on the policy of mass communication we have called informational.

Only a few sections of the following chapter have been published earlier; first, in a paper of which the introductory chapter formed the main body, and secondly, in a paper ('The non-homogeneity of the national state and the international flow of communication') which Nordenstreng and Varis presented in a symposium at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania (USA), in April 1972 (see references). Most of the text was written during summer 1972 for this book, and on the whole this Epilogue represents a current look into the subject: a critical appraisal of the approach.

12. Lessons of the past and potentials for the future

by the authors collectively

Perspectives of the consciousness industry and its control

Radio, television and the printed word are factors of such wide distribution and such crucial importance in modern society that they can well be called *the consciousness industry*. The comparison between mass communication and industrial production is justified on two grounds. First, in present-day society all individuals come under the influence of mass media, in fact to a very great extent; normally about a third of our waking time is spend in their company. Secondly, with the ever-increasing size of the audience of mass media, these media have come to form gigantic systems in industrialized societies, big business in the capitalist west. The circulation of newspapers and magazines and the rating figures of radio and TV audiences are assuming greater and greater importance, while the original purpose of communication — the transmission of information and experiences to the audience — is receding to the background.

This is not an insignificant aspect, as is illustrated for instance by the fact that in Finland nearly 3 per cent of the GNP is used to produce mass communication, i.e. the same share as that of some important branches of production (e.g. textiles). Of the total money involved in running the institutions of mass media, as much as 70 per cent is controlled by private capital and only 20 per cent is under parliamentary control (the budget of YLE), the other 10 per cent being controlled

by (political) citizen organisations. Obviously capital is not interested only in using the channels of communication to control the consciousness of the general public according to its interests, but also in using them directly to produce profit. Advertising plays a central role in the alliance between profit-making and cognitive control; it gives the media almost one half of their overall income and it is an essential component in the stream of messages functioning as a cultural barrier to protect the economic system.

Thus the machinery of modern mass communication should not be seen as a separate part of society; on the contrary, it is linked by complex and intricate ties to the economic and political structure. *The integration of mass communication into the other institutions of society* has increased during the last few decades, as the part played by advertising in maintaining the media has grown and as the control of the media has become concentrated in fewer hands.

The process of *concentration* is obvious in all industrial activity and the mass media; book and magazine publishers have merged into larger concerns, and commercial radio and television companies, for example in the United States, now form giant chains. Furthermore, many enterprises of mass communication have merged with outside corporations, whose production spans just about everything from oil to toothpaste. In addition, the electronic and the printed media have begun to merge into large enterprises of mass communication, whose output comprises textbooks and educational films, magazines for entertainment and TV cassettes.

Thus we do not want to view the media and their content in isolation from socio-politico-economical structures: we should be careful not to over-differentiate between the establishment (including the government

and the private sector) and the media system. We completely share the point made by a leading British mass-communication researcher:

> From time to time we may need to put the media under the microscope, but when we do this we should be careful to maintain the wider perspective. Always we are studying the mass communication process, the operation of the media *in society*. All aspects of the mass communication process should be seen in the wider economic, technological, political and social settings. Our present ignorance about the impact of the mass media is partly due to the refusal of researchers to accept this.[1]

After learning through the Finnish experiment we are convinced that mass communications should be seen not as an isolated institution for the distribution of information, culture and entertainment, but as an integral organ of the social body, in which the deepest blood-vessels and nervous pathways traverse the politico-economic tissue. *It is not sufficient to look at what happens within the media and try to change their policies, since most of the determining forces operate from outside, through institutional structures.*

However, the mass media should not be viewed as 100 per cent predetermined, either: there is always a *marginal scope of freedom* to change the practices within the media. The authors of this paper do not deny that something may be done to increase democracy in the media — and we ought to work constantly to this aim. But we do claim that those who want to limit their devotion in changing the world *only within the media* are biassed in their analysis and policy.

1 James D. Halloran, 'What do we need to know? Are we going to be able to find out?' Paper presented at the International Symposium on Communication: Technology, Impact and Policy, the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, March 23—25, 1972, p. 11.

In analysing the Finnish experiment of broadcasting — its theory and practice — it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that *an attempt at maximal true information cannot be socially neutral, but necessarily becomes 'partial'*. An opposite point of view was expressed by one of our critics as follows:

> The sin of YLE is not that it has allowed criticism to appear over loudspeaker and picture tube. The trouble is that it has strayed away from journalistic criticism, by which we mean the discussion of problems and shortcomings with objectivity and with the greatest possible professional judgement. The journalist does not try to improve the world, nor does he consider himself a competent brewer of patent medicines; he merely tries, according to the best of his ability, to show the world as he believes it truly to be.[2]

Here broadcasting is not blamed for transmitting information — in fact, the journalistic ideal offered is well in harmony with the theory of an informational programme policy — but for being propagandistic and partisan. However, while in conservative ideology the true information is thought to be 'neutral' or 'pure', in our opinion connections between the content of information and its implications for practical action in social and political life cannot be distinguished from one another.

The conservative ideology, based on the concept of neutral information separated from social action, was bound to collide with the informational policy of broadcasting which emphasizes that *new information by definition involves reorientation in outlook and hence ini-*

2 The editor columnist of *Aamulehti* (May 27, 1971), the largest Conservative daily in Finland, published in Tampere.

tiation to action. The latter line of thinking is based on the belief that no such thing as neutral information exists; *all information either supports the status quo or promotes new approaches to reality (innovation)*. At best, the communicator can try to report different types of information concerning reality, i.e. different approaches to the problems we confront. If the communicator decides to avoid 'partisan information' he in fact is exercizing censorship of such information that could give the audience relevant facts for appraising alternative realities, because 'partisan' is a label given to all information deviating from the *status quo* reality.

The argumentation over the new policy of broadcasting and its results was concentrated on problems of 'neutrality' and 'objectivity'. The criticism of YLE in bourgeois papers was not that YLE kept important information away from its audience but that it 'irresponsibly' disseminated too much 'destructive' information, biassed toward the 'negative' aspects of society. Even worse, the new critical documentaries included interpretations of the facts reported as well as recommendations for action, such as what should be done to overcome burning social problems like the inequality between classes and regions (changes in the politico-economic power structure), insecurity and alienation among large groups of citizens (reconsideration of the traditional forms of western democracy). It is notable that *the informational broadcasting policy was distrusted by the socio-economically privileged groups*, representing overwhelmingly conservative political elements, though not the majority of the population.

As was pointed out in the introductory Chapter, audience surveys indicate that during the first couple of years the new radio and television programmes treating societal topics critically were overwhelmingly positively

received. The initiation of demands for censorship of such programmes seems to have begun in the other mass media rather than among the audience: the suspicious climate of opinion was at least partly generated by the conservative press. Alternative opinion climates in this new situation lost their chance in the beginning, since opinions of the small-circulation non-bourgeois press were not supported by audience organisations until the late sixties.

Second, empirical data revealing the more detailed opinion structure among the audience suggest that those who became dissatisfied and distrustful during the five-year period of new programme policy did not oppose, in the great majority of cases, the new critical role of radio and television in societal issues. Instead, a substantial part — and maybe the majority — of dissatisfaction and distrust was focussed on what may be called violation of petit-bourgeois good manners. Both sources of dissatisfaction, of course, contributed to the 'failure' of the new programme policy by giving direct or indirect political support to those parties, the Conservatives and Centre party, which used their power in the YLE Administrative Council for dismissing the Director General and exercising a number of censorship measures.

Thus the 'failure' of the informational broadcasting policy may hardly be attributed to the substance of programme content, i.e. the topics covered; instead, obviously, *the way of expression in these programmes was often considered too shocking or abstract and high-brow*. In practice, the new policy seems to have gone only half-way towards the democratic principles 'for the people' and 'by the people'. No serious attention was given in the beginning to the proposition that the more active, critical, and informational the orientation of a communications policy, the more the organisational

structure to carry out this policy should be changed towards a participatory communications network. The informationally oriented YLE, while cutting itself off from the traditional mass media establishment, particularly the press — then also by earning enemies among it — did hardly anything to obtain alternative organisational links with society. It seems as if the new policy-makers at YLE, while struggling towards an operational autonomy, neglected tackling the problem of organisational isolation from society.

Turning back from listing components of the 'failure' to more general judgements about why the informational policy turned out to be a 'failure', the authors of this book do not agree with the conservative interpretation — straying away from journalistic objectivity — even though we quite well understand such a point of view as an honest manifestation of the interest of the prevailing (bourgeois) hegemony. We rather see that what is most significant in the reaction against broadcasting in Finland is simply *the potential threat felt by the power holders faced with a comprehensive transmission of truthful information about the society.* Indeed, access to knowledge and information is one of the most important reasons why the ruling class has a monopoly of power and why the underprivileged lack power.

Consequently, *any ideology of mass communication stressing the transmission of a wide and versatile spectrum of information, when honestly applied, is bound to be partial in favour of the suppressed interests in society.* Seen in this perspective, the bourgeois argumentation as to the faults of Finnish broadcasting policy is historically and socially naive: *as the facts and opinions covered do not fit in with the world view set up by the prevailing hegemony, they are just rejected (e.g. by defining them as 'propaganda').* Mention should here be made of the 'ultra-leftists' (anarchists) who found their way into broadcasting. But they are rather a negligible phenomenon, revealed in our analysis as nothing more than an irrelevant detail (see the introductory chapter), which nevertheless served as a scapegoat for the conservatives.

On the other hand, there was also leftist criticism of the Finnish experiment:

> The new direction of YLE began, rapidly and purposefully, to construct their new and radical programme policy. Its point of departure was the now classic sentence: 'YLE is to be a thorn in the flesh of the holders of power'. This objective was not felt unrealistic; on the contrary, its high ethical standard was supposed to guarantee its success. And in truth: if society were really composed of separate groups, each with their own interests, it would not be at all impossible to think that a strong radio company might 'rise' above all of these and function as a thorn in the flesh more or less of every power-holder. . .
>
> But in actual fact, YLE is an institution among the other institutions of society, and it is therefore involved in the struggle for these institutions. In this struggle there is always a stronger and a weaker side. In Finland the defenders of the capitalist form of society have so far always been on the stronger side; the government and the economy, as well as the press and the schools, are under their control. And it seems inevitable that the various institutions of society sooner or later have to adapt to the social forces which control them. All this now, of course, seems self-evident, but it seems to me as though those who have controlled YLE during the past liberal period have taken as their guideline the conception of YLE as an independent and even controlling force in society. In some mysterious way the concept of 'opinion formation' became an independent power factor, not affected by the normal laws of society. . .
>
> Institutionalized social criticism is not possible in a system with only one prevailing power centre. . . In spite of everything, our society is not a pluralistic one, nor will it become so within the framework of our present social system. Both left-wing

liberals and labour itself refused to believe this fact during the sixties. Now at least the left has reason to believe it.[3]

The present authors all subscribe to this statement as far as criticism of a liberal-pluralistic philosophy is concerned: the basic belief of a liberal that society is a web of numerous more or less independent and equally strong forces or groups has never proved valid in concrete reality. Whenever there is a significant decision to be made in a bourgeois society — such as joining the EEC, or the introduction of industrial democracy — plurality shrinks to a fairly simple dichotomy where big business and political conservatives are on the one side and the underprivileged groups on the other. Liberal approaches never found a third way to follow in such situations: in the final decisions they fall on either side of the dichotomy. The history of the Finnish experiment in informational broadcasting is a convincing document of the fallacies of a liberal concept of society.

On the other hand, the present authors do not agree with the preceding quotation in two essential respects: we do not regard our approach to informational mass communication as a 'pluralistic' one, and we do not accept a defeatist attitude as to the possibilities of influencing the institutions of mass communication by popular political force even within the capitalist society. What is crucial in the principles of informational communication policy is the *goal of using the mass media for transmitting information about concrete reality, i.e. accumulating concrete evidence on the objective world in the consciousness of a recipient.* This aspect, present

3 Lars D. Eriksson, Rundradion och den pluralistiska illusionen (YLE and the illusion of pluralism), *Nya Argus* 6/71.

in our formulations from the very beginning, has been overlooked by those observers — from the right to the left — who have argued about the issue of pluralism while debating informational policy.

If pluralism were considered to be the final principle determining the selection of messages for a mass medium we would face an extreme relativism of values. Here our approach certainly differs from the positivistic theory of values. We start from the fact that some values are true while some others are false. No subjectivism or relativism can be defended with respect to the values, either. We must admit that — even in matters of social and human values — all points of view and all pieces of information are not simply equally true: some are more than others in conformity with reality. *The informational principles of selection of messages for mass communication are derived from the concern for the truthful reflection of objective reality, not from the liberalistic concern for the 'balance' of all kinds of social interests — justified and non-justified.* A trivial example: to report in the name of pluralism that the globe may be round or flat would be a simple lie. Similarly a journalist or a TV producer that gives equal attention to propositions defending poverty mechanisms in society as to propositions attacking them may be pluralistic but is also a plain fool. On the other hand, we do not deny the obligation of transmitting information on all the members of social contradictions; this is one of the necessary conditions of maximal information on social issues.

Considering the possibilities of transmitting information in bourgeous society we of course admit that there are limitations which follow from the fact that society is after all governed by antagonistic power relations between two main social forces: capital and

labour. But *there is still room for transmission of information, and furthermore, of that kind of information which has a critical and innovating function.* The institutions in society which have the task of controlling the consciousness of the people are enjoying *relative autonomy:* besides serving the *status quo* they also serve innovation.

The autonomous function to promote innovation may be — and mostly is — neglible when compared with the integrative function to promote conservation, and it is obvious that the relative strength of autonomy varies between societies and even within one society over time (as happened in Finland during the late sixties). Yet it is to our mind essential to note such a built-in contradiction in the structure of societies which in the long run gives hope for a realization of the informational communication policy. Furthermore, it can be claimed that with the progress of productive technology (automation) the relative share of specialist's training in education will decrease and better possibilities are created for the mobilization of critical intelligence.

The perspective of 'class determinism' advocated in the preceding paragraphs may also be applied to the field of *international communications* which perhaps, in the last analysis, are determined rather by the strains and conflicts *within nations* — and not primarily by international conflicts or technological innovations as they first appear to be. The authors view the international streams of communication as manifestations of the ruling interests of the societies from which they come, and not as an unanimous output of the nations involved. In the course of history, the ruling class in each society has manouvered the main media of communication (as well as other means of exercising power) to contribute to its interests in various ways; e.g. by

producing material profit (accumulation of capital) and by controlling the consciousness of the oppressed classes.

What could and should be done?

The current perspectives of consciousness industry seem to have generated a growing international concern about 'access' to the media by the people. And many seem to think that a way of remedying the tendency towards unifying concentration is found in the principles of decentralisation, 'multilateral communication', etc., inspired by the new technology of communication (especially cable TV). Such a strategy advocated by the enthusiasts of two-way flow and cable operations cannot be realistic. It certainly is a romantic idea of people communicating in their own terms, but this is hardly possible in the present concentrated and internationalized media field. *It is naive to think that (international) capital, within the present politico-economical framework, would suddenly surrender the strategically important mass media to the people.*

The future organizational alternatives under discussion in Europe can be summarized in three theoretical types of broadcasting systems, each having counterparts in the existing western societies today: first, the *commercial* broadcasting system where privately owned radio and television networks serve the audience on a competitive basis; second, the *centralized monopoly* broadcasting system which is controlled and operated by a central authority representing the nation-state government; and third, the *parliamentary monopoly* system where broadcasting policies and operations are controlled by parliamentary bodies, nominated by elected representatives of the voting public.

Although none of the present broadcasting systems fully corresponds to any of these basic types, sufficiently close approximations do exist to warrant some conclusions concerning the political, cultural and economic impact of these organizational alternatives.

Numerous expert groups as well as international bodies working on problems of cultural policy have documented serious malfunctions in the commercial model of broadcasting. By favouring metropolitan areas and audience groups with high consumption-level the commercial broadcasting neglects the informational needs of the low-income and low-education groups, thus operating against the very basic ideas of democracy. Commercial competition also tends to reduce the cultural and informational level of the programme content, favouring either sensations or escapist type of entertainment at the cost of cultural activation thus operating against innovation and progress.

Increasing criticism is also being raised over the centralized monopoly model of broadcasting, as operated in several western industrialized societies. The 'monopolistic management by centralized institutions' is perceived as a passivating and alienating factor in cultural production, analogous to a teacher-oriented system in education and even a cultural 'colonization' among the audience.

Parliamentary monopoly system, while not as yet fully developed in any of the presently operative broadcasting organizations, seems to offer potential solutions for many of the existing, and emerging, problems of permanent education, promotion of cultural diversification, and encouragement to cultural creativity. The nearest approximations to the parliamentary broadcasting system appear to develop in Scandinavia, where, in different forms, also participatory programme forms

are experimented, enabling the citizen groups and associations to co-produce telecasts to the national audience and thus get the public opinion focussed at their most pressing and urgent problems.

Perhaps the most far-reaching application of direct citizen access and control over production facilities in the mass media in western societies[4] is in Finland, where since January 1972 there have been monthly programmes called *'Citizen's Information Store'* (*Kansalaisen tietolaari*). A special TV production team meets the local public, and arranges meetings where citizens themselves decide which problems in their city, village, or factory they want to telecast to the nation. During a preparatory period the production team puts filming at the citizens' own disposal so as they can produce their own film to be shown in the programme. The ten-minute film is given as an introduction to the live discussion, where hundreds of citizens meet to interrogate their local, district and national leaders. The discussions have turned out to be much more than a mere 'dialogue', where questions are discretely asked and discretely answered. Here, the citizens' own production intensifies the programmes into real confrontations, often with immediate national

4 Several forms of 'participatory programming' are in operation in European and American radio and television systems, as reported extensively in Brian Groombridge, *Television and the People* (Penguin Education Specials, Harmondsworth, 1972). However, in most of these programmes only participation, not production operations, are extended to the citizens directly. A kind of semi-control over programme topics is present in the 'face-to-face discussion and dialogue' by 'addressing people in terms which they understand, on issues which they really care about and which they have in some way shared in selecting' (Groombridge 1972, 248).

consequences. Judging from the popular support among the public at large and from the strong opposition among political and business leaders, the long-range effect of this type of programme may become qualitatively different from earlier approaches to participatory programming.

Relaxation of the radio and television monopoly in favour of any private groups or associations would not, however, be instrumental in promoting democratic participation, cultural activism, or progress in society, because of the internationally valid fact that membership structures in private associations in western societies are overwhelmingly undemocratic, overrepresenting the educationally, politically, and economically privileged social classes. Transfer of the broadcasting policy control from parliamentary represention to a plurality of private associations would instigate a marked setback from the principles of democratic cultural policy.

Opportunities for expression and active participation should be freely granted to organisations and associations representing the spectrum of interests among the population, but a just balance between them can only be reached under a parliamentary control system, where all population sectors and geographical areas are represented in the governing bodies.

A crucial question is whether the parliamentary monopoly model of broadcasting is compatible with the principles of local decentralization and popular activation. All evidence available would suggest an affirmative answer. Although all potentialities of the parliamentary control model have not yet been exploited in local administration, both the western political tradition and recent approaches toward new forms of direct democracy indicate a similar trend.

An organizational mix-strategy worth considering is

maintaining parliamentary form of control but relaxing the monopoly in favor of e.g. a multitude of competing public channels. There is some experience of this. Sweden initiated a two-channel TV competition in her parliamentary broadcasting monopoly in 1969. Recently published data indicate that both the programme structure and the programme preferences among the TV audience changed significantly toward light entertainment, away from cultural and informational programme content. Relaxing the monopoly worked thus against the principles of permanent education and cultural animation.

Considering the central significance of the organizational forms in planning and executing the broadcasting policies during the forthcoming era of the new media technology, all national and international experience in the broad field of broadcasting policy should be carefully analysed and evaluated. In this evaluation due concern should be focussed on the fact that lasting international understanding and cultural co-operation can only be generated by national, ultimately local, activity, based on democratic participation in the framework of the cultural and political autonomy of all nation states, large and small alike.

It is worth noting that the new technology of communication does not in any way do away with the basic question of control. On the contrary, the communication complex, with its increasingly obscure boundaries between different media makes it more important than ever to weigh carefully the alternatives and to decide which best satisfies the demands set by optimal social development. For example, the position that a production organisation based on a public monopoly somehow automatically becomes out of date at the time of abundance in cable channels and cassettes is not

supported by anything in the new technology itself.

It should be borne in mind that *the guiding principle of the state monopoly of broadcasting has been to guarantee that no private interests can dictate the conditions of the transmission of information, and that the wealth of the social groups should not determine their access to mass media.* A balanced picture of the views and interests of all major groups in society is very unlikely to emerge if various interest groups are allowed to produce programmes with their own resources; the probable result would be political and/or geographical one-sidedness and concentration similar to that observable at present in the press. Thus it is fully consistent with the spirit of state monopoly organisation to decentralize the system by providing various groups of population with public resources of production (economic, technical and intellectual) for purposes of making programmes.

In our opinion, concentration in the mass media must be accepted at the present stage. The important questions are: *who controls the concentrated production, whose goals does it serve and on whose terms does it function.* Commercial trusts and monopolies — in the field of mass communication as elsewhere — have been outside the reach of control by the mass audience and have been controlled exclusively by big business. At present, however, they are beginning to merge to a greater and greater extent with the state and the political decision-making process (e.g. the military-industrial complex), in which the people have at least a formal voice. *Public control over production* — concentrated control over a concentrated system — is thus the most sensible strategy, even though such control is not likely to affect the basic direction of production (either in the field of communication or in any other area) to any sizeable extent.

Thus, while aiming at increasingly democratic control of communication, we must follow social development closely; nor is it necessary to lose faith even if the results of our efforts seem scanty or if the progressive line undergoes momentary reverses. We must bear in mind that the present stage in the history of capitalist industrial societies is characterized by the increasing and irrevocable exposure of social conflicts. This occurs in spite of the way in which the marketing and manipulation machinery unrelentingly fills the consciousness of the population with messages consistent with the interests of the ruling class.

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